UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY

BY

MUBITA VILLEM CHAKA

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This Thesis is Dedicated:

To My Beloved Wife, Kabuba Edith Chaka, our Son Muyongo Mishake Chaka,

To

My Sisters, Mbombozana Aldenia Chaka, Iuze Julia Chaka and the late Mutafela Christina Chaka, my love to her and may rest in peace. To all my brothers and sisters and brothers and sisters in laws. Hope they will follow my foot prints...

And

My Parents, Mr. Lingwangwa Daniel Chaka, Mrs. Kahimbi Elizabeth Chaka and as well as my Parents in-law, Mr. Gwala Patrick Snvula, Mrs. Nsala Agitha Gwala, for their love, encouragements and support they gave me during my studies in Canada.

ABSTRACT

In 1990, Namibia, formerly South West Africa, achieved its independence and began reforms in Teacher Education. In 1993, the BETD (Basic Education Teacher Diploma) was implemented in Teacher Education Colleges in Namibia. This program which called for equality and democracy in the learning situation advocated using a learner-centered approach to education.

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions and practices of the lecturers and student teachers regarding learner-centered education at one Namibian college of education. Although the focus was on the six lecturers and ten student teachers, five Ministry of Education Officials and seven teachers, who were supervising the student teachers were also included in the study. Data was collected through interviews, classroom observations, field notes and document analysis during a four month period.

It was found that although perceptions of what "learner-centered" meant varied slightly among the participants, most seemed optimistic regarding its implementation. The lecturers' and student teachers' classroom practice matched their perceptions of learner- centered which was limited mainly to group and pair activities.

For some of the participants, even the strategy of using group work caused problems. The study revealed that participants need to be more aware of the dynamics and interaction for successful group work.

While participants indicated that lack of resources, and crowded classrooms also affects the implementation of learner-centered education, their greatest concern was a lack of role models for appropriate learner-centered strategies. Due to their prior teacher directed experiences with education, most participants had never observed any learner-centered strategies.

The desire of the participants for more workshops and continuing dialogue about learner- centered education led the researcher to be optimistic concerning the future of this approach in Namibia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Namibia, formerly South West Africa, borders Zambia and Angola in the north, Zimbabwe and Botswana in the east, and South Africa in the south. It covers an area of 824 290 km^2 and is sparsely populated. The census taken in 1992 estimated a population size of 1 574 927 with a density of 1.9 persons per square kilometre (Cooper, 1988). Namibia was under colonization for a period of more than a hundred years, with the first colonizers being the Germans, who ruled from 1884 to 1915. As the result of the First World War, the Germans lost Namibia to South Africa, which was on the side of the allied forces. South Africa ruled Namibia from 1915 until 1990 when Namibia received its independence.

Pre-Colonial Education

The concept of "formal education," as we know it today, did not exist in the minds of Namibian indigenous people. In pre-colonial Namibia, "education" referred primarily to teaching the young and inexperienced the practical skills required to sustain the well-being of the community. "Formal teachers" were unnecessary, as the older and more experienced members of society took it upon themselves to educate the young. Formal

schools did not exist because children were given instruction at the "job site": in the home, in the fields, or wherever learning was necessary (O'Callaghan, 1977; Gayner, 1979; Ndilula, 1983; Christie, 1985; Akande, 1988; Katjavivi, 1988; Mbamba, 1989, and Nyambe, 1996). As Harber (1993: 416) states, "The education system of pre-colonial Namibia was similar to that found elsewhere in Africa, being an integral part of everyday life rather than a specialist activity carried out in particular buildings." In addition, Christie (1985:30) notes that:

> In pre-colonial societies education was part of daily life. Children learned about their society and their work from older members of the community. They learned by experience, from doing tasks. And this informal education didn't stop, like schools do, when children reach a certain age. There were initiation ceremonies and rituals, which were part of people's education. People also learned about their history and past traditions through the songs, poems and stories that were passed on orally.

In short, Namibians employed informal methods of instruction to educate their young about what mattered most to them: their culture and way of life, including the wisdom and values of the community and of society at large. The "curriculum" was relevant to their needs and lifestyle. It was not out of tune with the reality of their lives. If education is life and life is education, as Dewey (1963) put it, the traditional education of the pre-colonial inhabitants of Namibia was in harmony with the environment in which they lived.

Colonial Education

In 1906, German colonialists provided formal education for the white settlers, but provided no education for the remainder of the Namibian population. The Germans felt that educating Namibian inhabitants would implant undesirable ideas that would make the Namibians more aware of issues of injustices and human rights. It was also thought that the local people did not contribute to the economic development of their country (Ndelula, 1983, Collins, 1993 and Harber, 1993).

Later, around 1923, South Africa established two education systems, consisting of schools for the Whites and schools for the Blacks. The schools for the Blacks were run by the missionaries who stressed the need to train more Black teachers, as it was felt that Black teachers were necessary in order to propagate the missionary ideology. This resulted in the establishment of three teacher training colleges for Blacks. The Rhenish Mission opened a teacher training college at Okahandja, and the Finnish Mission established two teacher training colleges, one at Oniipa and another at Okahao. In 1925, the Catholic Mission opened another teacher training college at Dobra but this was for Coloreds. In later years when the college at Dobra closed, Coloreds went for teacher training to Cape Town in South Africa. They could not go to the schools for the Whites or Blacks because each ethnic group had its own education system (Ndelula, 1983; Harber, 1993 and Cohen, 1994).

In 1948, the National Party (N.P.) came to power in South Africa. On July 7th, 1954, Honorable Minister H. F. Verwoerd, head of the Ministry for Native Affairs and a leading architect of apartheid and Bantu (Black) education, strengthened the separation of the education system according to ethnic groups (Harber, 1993). Harber (1993:417) stated that:

> The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.... For that reason it is no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed.

It is clear that the Namibian school system at this time was neither designed to foster harmonious relations between the different ethnic populations nor was it designed to improve social, economic and political conditions in Namibia. Instead, schools were used as a vehicle for the social, economic, and political development of apartheid (Akande, 1987; Eliou, 1976 and Christie, 1985).

In the early 1950s, educational services for Whites, Blacks, and Coloreds were controlled by one body, the Department of Education of the South West Africa Administration. In 1953, the Bantu Education Act (Act No. 47) was passed, an act which advocated separate education systems on the basis of race and ethnicity (Ndelula, 1984). In this case, the Department of Education in South Africa determined the curriculum for the entire Bantu Education Department. For example, the courses offered at the

Native teacher training colleges were decided upon by the organizers of Native Education, who worked for the Department of Education in South Africa (Cohen, 1994). In 1958, the South African government appointed a commission, led by Dr. H.J. Van Zyl of the South African Education Department, to investigate the possibilities of further separating the education system in South West Africa (Cohen, 1994). In 1962, the Van Zyl commission's recommendations of separate education systems were confirmed and implemented in South West Africa's education system. Later, the government became involved in Black education. Once aware of the acute shortage of teachers in the North, where the majority of Blacks lived, particularly in what was then Owamboland, the South African government called upon the Odendaal Commission to conduct a viability study which resulted in the establishment of a government funded teacher training college in the north. The Commission recommended that the two Finnish teacher training schools, one in Oniipa and one in Okahao, be replaced by one main teacher training institution to be situated in Oshakati, an established business centre in northern Namibia. This resulted in the establishment of Ongwediva Teacher Training College at Oshakati.

The initial admission requirement to all the Black teacher training colleges was Standard IV (grade 6) (Cohen, 1994). The students in these colleges were mainly taught by unqualified teachers, primarily White soldiers who were recruited into the national service after their

matriculation (grade 12). This may have been one of the reasons why the government treated these Black graduates differently than graduates from the White colleges in South Africa. They received less pay and were not allowed, according to apartheid policy, to teach in schools for Coloreds or Whites.

In the 1970s, teacher training colleges for Blacks underwent various "reforms" because, at that time, the government was looking for a "more suitable teacher education" system that would better prepare the graduates to teach in the Black communities. Curriculum reforms were aimed at changing college programs. While course titles were changed, the content primarily remained the same (Christie, 1985; Mbamba, 1982 and Ndelula, 1983).

Another problem was that due to the lack of trained secondary teachers, many of the best trained primary school teachers were placed in secondary schools, which weakened the "human power" in primary education. Placing primary teachers in secondary schools was also problematic for the secondary schools because it left them staffed by many teachers who were not qualified to teach at that level. The result was a high failure rate for students writing external examinations, i.e., standard 8 (grade 10) and standard 10 (grade 12).

Even after the reforms of the 1970s, the aim of the colonial education system continued to encourage awareness of "racial differences" among

Namibians. The following statement by Christie (1985) cited Rose and Turner, 1975:251) illustrates the "racial differences" argument:

> We must remember that we are dealing with a Bantu child, i.e. a child trained and conditioned in Bantu culture, endowed with a knowledge of a Bantu language, and imbued with values, interests and behaviour patterns learned at the knees of a Bantu mother. These facts must dictate to a very large extent the content and methods of his early education. The schools must also give due regard to the fact that out of school hours the young Bantu child develops and lives in a Bantu community; and when he reaches maturity he will be concerned with sharing and developing the life and culture of that community.

The type of education imposed on Black Namibians did not prepare them for equal participation in society, as it was based on the apartheid policy of divide and rule. The education system in South West Africa, known as Bantu education, was mainly based on racial grounds, leading to "Education for Whites," Education for Coloreds," and "Education for Blacks."

Although Bantu education was again reformed in the 1980s, with the advent of National Education, these reforms remained within the framework of Bantu education. One example was the continued use of the Cape Syllabus which still promoted White domination. The content of the curriculum still reflected the needs of South Africa rather than those of Namibia (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992, Cohen, 1994 and Taffesse, 1994).

Post-Colonial Education

After almost 100 years of colonization, free national elections were conducted in Namibia in 1989. The South West People's Organization (SWAPO) won a majority and invited other parties to help formulate the constitution, which was completed in 1990. Namibia received its independence from the South African government on the 21st of March, 1990. The new government maintained that there was a great need to reform the traditional education system because it had perpetuated apartheid ideologies (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992). Rowell (1995:3) states, "An authoritarian system of instruction [had] fostered memorization and rote learning and inhibited independent thinking and the development of problem solving strategies." Examinations had been emphasized as the only means of assessing students and promoting them to the next class or grade. The former education system had been teacher-centered, with teachers viewed as the main source of knowledge. The learners were regarded as passive recipients of knowledge, or mere empty vessels needing to be filled with teacher-knowledge. Learners were not encouraged to reflect on their learning activities, and curricular subjects were compartmentalized rather than integrated. Subject compartmentalization limited students' awareness of connections between the curriculum and real life situations within their communities. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (1990) described the former

education system as non-uniform, uncoordinated, ill-organized and fragmented. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1992:3), in a critique of the former colonial education system, found that:

> Some programmes show a general tendency to concentrate too much on academic knowledge and formal examinations at the expense of professionalisation. Some have had insufficient consistency between the stated principles of the programme, and its structure and implementation. Some have achieved a high degree of consistency but are too demanding on resources. The various programmes treat school practice differently, both in scope and organisation, and give different competencies in terms of teacher qualification. They are usually seen to be terminal studies.

The intention of post-independence education reforms was to create a unified national education system, which was to be called Basic Education. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1992) stated that Basic Education was to be a national ten year program equally accessible and equitable for all and free from bias according to ethnicity and gender. Teacher education programs were reconstructed as a "single national teacher education program for Basic Education" offering a "Basic Education Teacher Diploma" (BETD). This was implemented in January 1993 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992) and currently the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) is granted at the four colleges of education in Namibia, namely Caprivi College of Education (CCE), Rundu College of Education (RCE), Ongwediva College of Education (OCE), and Windhoek College of Education (WCE).

The New Teacher Education Program

Under the new Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993:5) encourages student teachers to use learner-centered teaching strategies. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (1990), learner-centered education is comprised of the following aspects:

- The learners as individuals should be accepted and acknowledged, with learning styles adapted to their individual needs.
- The learners' knowledge and experiences both at home and school must be accepted and built upon as a good starting point for knowledge.
- The learners should be involved in collaborative, interactive, cooperative efforts, so that they will be able to share their learning experiences with others.

From this perspective, learners are considered as participants who can contribute to the development of their own education. In the learner-centered approach, as the learners become more active in their learning experiences, the role of the teacher becomes that of a facilitator or mediator (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992 and 1993 and Callewaert and Callos, 1992). Clearly this is a major shift in philosophy from the teacher centered teacher education programs of the past.

Statement of the Problem

Although the Basic Education Teacher Diploma Program in Namibia with its emphasis on the learner-centered approach was implemented in 1993, little research has been conducted regarding its implementation at the college level. Frykholm (1995) did a National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma in all four Namibian Colleges of Education; Marope and Noonan (1995) evaluated the Teacher Education Reform Project (TERP) in Namibia; Nyambe (1996) carried out research on Teacher Education and Societal Transformation in Post-Apartheid Namibia and finally, Sibuku (1997) conducted research on Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of the Learner-Centered Approach in Namibia. None of the research examined the lecturer's or college students' perceptions of a learner-centered approach or teaching strategies used to facilitate this approach. Therefore, this study attempted to explore the notion of learner-centered education as adapted by the college lecturers and student teachers at Ongwediva College of Education in Namibia. It also attempted to establish which learner-centered teaching strategies were utilized by lecturers at the college and student teachers during their school based studies (teaching practice).

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions and practices of the college lecturers regarding the learner-centered approach ?

2. What are the perceptions and practices of the student teachers regarding the learner-centered approach ?

Significance of the Study

The study should be of help to all college lecturers, to the curriculum unit at the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology, and to the teachers in the schools. It will hopefully reveal the participants' understandings of a learner-centered approach and to what extent they are implementing this approach in their classrooms. The study may also help to reveal factors that hinder the learner-centered approach as well as suggestions for improving its implementation at the college level.

Delimitation

This study was delimited to the context of one of the four teacher education colleges in Namibia, specifically Ongwediva College of Education at Oshakati. Unfortunately, it was not possible to include all four colleges in this study because of financial constraints, including the cost of travel from one college to another, as well as the cost of accommodations.

Limitation

A limitation of the study was the four month time duration (May to August 1996) collecting data at Ongwediva College. Again financial constraints prevented extending the time at Ongwediva College, as the researcher had limited funding and time to complete his Masters program overseas.

Definition of Terms

In order to ensure clarity and understanding of terms, definitions will be provided of the terms as they are used within the context of this research. The definition of terms adds precision to a scientific research study. Creswell (1994:106) stated:

> The words of everyday language are rich in multiple meanings. Like other symbols, their power comes from the combination of meaning in a specific setting.... Scientific language ostensibly strips this multiplicity of meaning from words in the interest of precision. This is the reason common terms are given "technical meaning" for scientific purposes.

Creswell (1994:106) further comments that "Scientists have sharply defined terms with which to think clearly about their research and to communicate their findings and ideas accurately." The following terms for the purposes of this study and within the context of the Namibian education system, are defined as follows:

Learner-Centered Education: An education system where the learner is central in the learning process. The learner is involved in meaningful activities so as to gain an understanding of the topic of inquiry, with the assistance of the teacher as a facilitator. Learning can occur in an individual, pair, or group situation, but it demands a high level of participation from the learner in the learning and teaching situation.

Basic Education: The formal education system, which covers Grade 1-10 in the Namibian education system, implemented in 1991.

Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD): A three year teacher training program in Namibia implemented in 1993 and designed to train student teachers who will subsequently teach grades 1 to 10.

Lecturers: College staff who are qualified to teach at Namibia's teacher education colleges. Currently, the "lecturers" are sometimes referred to as "teacher educators."

Teacher Centered Education: An education system in which the teacher is the central figure in the learning situation. The teacher is mainly responsible for delivering the information, whereas the learners are the recipients and objects of the learning situation and thus have limited participation in the learning process. This approach was standard in the colonial education system, which put great emphasis on memorization and rote learning and made the teacher the dominant factor in teaching and learning.

Colored Education: The education system for people of mixed blood (White and Black).

Bantu Education: The education system designed specifically for Black Namibians and Black South Africans by White South Africans.

Teacher Education Reform Program (TERP): A Swedish agency, acting through Umea University in Sweden, that assists with pre-service and teacher education reforms in Namibia.

School Based Studies (SBS): A program designed for Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) students in Namibia, which requires student teachers to carry out their teaching practice in schools and to develop teaching materials.. This is one of the major requirements that every student teacher has to complete before he or she is awarded the diploma upon completion of his/her studies.

National Institute for Educational Development (NIED): A wing of the Ministry of Education and Culture responsible for curriculum, professional, and program development. It also spearheads the educational reforms in the Namibian Education System.

Organization of the Thesis

This Thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter I presents introductory material, the historical background on the Namibian education system, the statement of the problem and the significance of the study.

Definition of terms is also included in chapter I. Chapter II presents the conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter III presents a review of the literature related to the study. Chapter IV reviews the research design and methodology. It also includes reflections regarding the methodology used during data collection. Chapter V provides the data analysis and findings and Chapter VI gives a summary, reflections and recommendations.

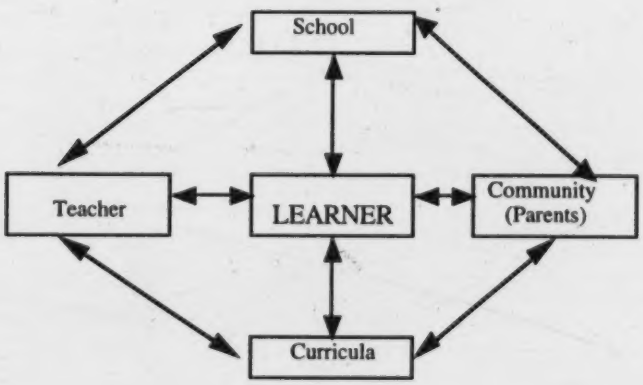
CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This Chapter presents the study's conceptual framework, based on learner-centered teacher education. The conceptual framework illustrates the components that the researcher believes are important and should be considered when implementing learner-centered education. These are as follows: Teachers, Schools, Students or Learners, the Curriculum and the Community. Figure 1 illustrates the researcher's views of the conceptual framework for an effective learner-centered approach.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



The role of each component and its relationship to the learner is briefly discussed in this chapter. Although each of the four components is discussed under a separate heading, there is a natural overlap between these components. For example, it is difficult to talk about a school without mentioning the curriculum or teachers.

The conceptual framework of the study is mainly based on theories pertaining to teachers, community members, students, and curriculum developers, all of whom are critical to teacher education in Namibia and elsewhere. The researcher believes that for teacher education to be effective, it is necessary to consider the contributions of teachers, learners, curriculum developers, and members of the community.

Community in Learner-Centered Education

In order for Namibian learner-centered education to be effective, teacher education should include the stakeholders, so that the education system will be "whole" and "holistic." Parents send their children to school to be educated, and all parents want their children to be taught in the right way. In addition, parents want their children to learn skills that will help them in their adult life (Greening and Spenceley, 1988 and Tizard and Hughes, 1988).

Parents should be involved in their children's education because parents too are teachers and can co-teach with a school teacher. Parents can

be helpful in teaching their children to read and write, and can assist them with assignments given by their teachers. Also parents can work with teachers toward consistent discipline at home and school (Tizard and Hughes, 1988). McGilp and Michael (1994:5) argue that:

> Parents teach their children by answering their questions about themselves, their families, friends and other people, how things are done, nature, society and the world itself. Parents teach by encouragement, demonstrations, modeling, revising and monitoring children's efforts. They often use step-by-step instruction to enable children to be successful in their efforts. In teaching children to set up table, for instance parents encourage children to help them. They demonstrate the conventional positions for placing particular items of cutlery; and revise the process over and over again.

Parents play a role in educating their children, and the education system should encourage them to continue to do so. In this way, the gap between school and community can be bridged. Another way of reducing the gap between school and community is to gear the school curriculum to the needs of the community. Dewey (1963) once said, "education means life," which implies that schools should offer a curriculum that will help the learner to function in real life situations. If learners have a curriculum that cannot be applied in their community then that community will not support the education of its children because what they are learning will not appear to be "viable." If the community is integrated into the education system, then tangible improvements should result in terms of both classroom practice and school administration. This can help teachers and

principals to be enthusiastic about involving the parents in their children's learning and in school activities in general (Greening and Hughes, 1988).

When teachers understand and respect the parents' involvement, feelings, and contributions to school activities, this will make a difference in establishing a strong partnership between the school and the community (Berger, 1987 and Kemp, 1996). Berger (1987:103) states that:

> Parents sometimes serve as resources in the school's instructional program. As volunteers they may develop materials and curriculum ideas or occasionally share their expertise. Schools that have encouraged innovative development of resource materials by parents emphasize the benefits schools may receive.

Teer and Hunter (1979:5) contend that:

> Curriculum materials can be developed using local resources. The community setting itself is useful, and can provide many lessons. Community members can be called upon to share their skills and knowledge; visiting them at home or at work offers young people a chance to master a skill or simply to absorb some wisdom from an older, more experienced person.

Parents can be incorporated into school activities many ways; they can give lessons in the areas of their specialization, and they can also be involved in the learner's project work by supervising and giving assistance to the learners. In addition, parents can be involved in educational or school policy-making. Parental involvement in policy-making can be effective as long as teachers and teacher educators examine their assumptions and views about the role of parents in the participation paradigm.

Some teachers and school administrators discourage the involvement of parents in educational activities. They argue that some parents are not sufficiently educated in order to be involved in school activities, especially on the level of decision making. These teachers and administrators are forgetting the fact that parents, whether educated or not, are capable of teaching their children certain skills and values that will help the learners to advance towards adulthood. Also, parents remain the first teachers of their children (Bell, 1976; Hannon, 1995 and Heath and McLaughlin, 1996). Berger (1987:103) indicates that "Whether sufficiently appreciated or not, parents have always reared and educated their children until informal education was supplemented by formal education." To ensure the effective participation of parents, all we can do is empower them and orient them toward school activities.

The Namibian Education System needs to include the community in its education activities in order to bridge the gap that was created by the colonial education system. In the Broad Policy Directives for Education Reform and Renewal in Namibia (1991:16), it is stated that:

> Communities have therefore to be mobilized to contribute to the construction of facilities. A pilot project is being implemented in Uukwaludhi District of Owamboland. The local community is participating in the construction of schools. The Ministry intends to use this experience to mobilize all communities in rural areas to contribute to the improvement of their schools.

Through the relationship between schools and community members, children can become more fully aware of their increasing competence and can be helped to look forward with confidence to future challenges ahead.

Schools

In technical terms, a school is a bridge between the informal and formal education of a human being. As school is an important facet of human life, it should be an institution that guides and prepares its learners for real life (Dewey, 1963 and Freire, 1994).

In the colonial education system, schools kept the local communities to one side and did not involve them in school activities or in the learning of their children. The educational authorities believed that teachers alone should educate the children. It could be that the local communities were viewed as unable to facilitate the learning of their children. It could also be that, in the eyes of policy makers, the low socio-economic status of these communities made them appear too unproductive to be involved in educational affairs. Scholars such as Farrant (1980), Smrekar (1996), and Newman and Beck (1996) explain that the separation of parents from schools affected the education of the children because it hindered teachers from identifying some of the major problems in student performance in school. In addition, some communities lost interest in schooling because they believed that schools were miseducating their children. Farrant (1980:250)

states, "Traditional schools tended to keep parents out, using the argument that a professional skill such as teaching must be carried out without interruption or interference." Separating schools from local communities created a big problem; teachers and members of the public each viewed the other as a totally separate group with whom they had no common interest. In addition, jurisdictional issues arose between the schools and local communities. School teachers and administrators claimed that they were responsible for educating the children, whereas parents, on the other hand, claimed that they had power over their children and that therefore, schools and teachers should not dictate to them how they should help their children to cope with schooling. The lack of communication between schools and parents led to poor student performance and a high failure rate for learners (Berger, 1981, 1987 and Bray et al., 1986).

In addition, the consequences of widening the gap between school and community setback progress in education. Farrant, (1980:251) indicates that "The unfortunate consequence was that the children became increasingly alienated from their communities and ill prepared for playing any useful roles in them." In order to overcome this problem, teacher education should be able to prepare student teachers to incorporate or involve the local communities in the school system. The links between schools, teacher colleges, and the community should be strengthened in order to make student teachers more aware of the situation (Atkin and Bastiani, 1989). As

the Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1994:3) indicates, the new teacher education program should train teachers to:

- develop understanding and respect for cultural values and beliefs, especially those of the Namibian people;
- prepare the teacher to strengthen the partnership between school and community.

Learner-Centered Curriculum

The field of curriculum studies is recent in educational literature. In fact, it started appearing in education in the early 20th century around 1918 in the writings of Franklin Bobbitt (Okech and Asiachi, 1992). Okech and Asiachi (1992) look at curriculum as all the learning that is planned for the learners, with this learning being guided and facilitated by the school or the institution for learning. They further point out that the curriculum consists of "content, teaching methods, and purpose." Therefore, when the curriculum is designed, the learner must be considered first and should be placed in the center of the design. The experiences of the learner, both in schools and outside schools, should be taken into consideration. Okech and Asiachi (1992:5) define curriculum in the following terms:

- Those activities which may be undertaken in the class or outside the class. These experiences are provided within the subject areas;

- The out-of-class programmes or activities which pupils take part in at school either in the class or outside it. Children attend in groups and not as a class. These activities used to be known as extra-curricular activities and include games, clubs and scouting groups;
- The created environment in which pupils learn more or less unconsciously by exposure; for example, by imitating or copying the lifestyle of teachers, pupils learn to be clean as a result of living in clean school surroundings. These activities are often neglected by many teachers, but are a very important aspect of learning.

In contrast, the curriculum in Bantu Education was viewed in a very different way. In the colonial education system, curriculum was regarded as an instructional parcel that was designed in a different place and environment by designers who possessed limited background about the people they were designing for or knowledge of their situation. When the examinations were given, many learners failed because they could not achieve the objectives put forth by the curriculum designers. In science, for example, the learners were expected to carry out experiments, but the schools in rural areas had no laboratories, test tubes, or science facilities in general. Some learners had no formal classrooms and the curriculum was taught in the open air under the trees (commonly referred to as "tree schools"). Under such conditions, can one expect learners to learn

effectively, especially if what they are supposed to learn is not available in their environment? (The Frontline Teacher, 1992 and Totemeyer, 1994). Schwartz and Pollishuke (1990:50) state that:

> When planning ... an integrated, child-centered curriculum ... with the children and by the children, the curriculum, the themes, the activities and the active learning experiences become more relevant, because they are built on the backgrounds, interests and everyday life experiences of each individual student. Children move towards the goal of becoming lifelong learners as they gain a positive attitude towards school.

Bray et al. (1986) relate a true story about a community in Nigeria that was involved in school activities, thus greatly improving the ties between school and community. Some of the community members were invited into the classroom to tell folk stories to the learners; others who were skilled in craftwork were invited to teach these skills to the learners. Bray (1986:118) presents the following incident in detail:

> Tunde, aged 10, in the Yoruba medium class, had been asked in his social studies class to find out details from his father about a local festival. At first the father was unwilling... it had nothing to do with school, he said. But Tunde persisted, father told him, and Tunde made his contribution in class with great success. He went back and told his father. A few days later the father told the project worker, you know that was the first time I felt I had something to offer the school.

By telling a story that was not written in any prescribed curriculum texts, Tunde's father was very helpful to the learners and the teacher. He acted as a resource person to the learners and the teacher by relating a traditional festival of his community. In practice, however, it is likely that teacher

education in Namibia may not involve people in rural areas because many are illiterate and it is perceived that they may not be able to contribute to formal curriculum development in the schools.

However, Bacchus et al. (1991), Sowell (1996), and Rockwell et al. (1996) argue that other educators have managed to involve the community, both literate and illiterate, in curriculum development and that this approach has been successful, as long as citizens are involved in meaningful ways. As far as involving the community is concerned, it is always good to understand other cultures Bacchus et al., citing a study by Kann (1989:3) indicates that:

> Based on her experiences in Botswana, Kann has suggested that all community members are quite capable of sufficiently understanding the complex issues involved (in attempts to improve the quality of education) provided that someone takes the time and trouble necessary to explain them adequately.

This strategy of involving the community in the curriculum is especially important when basic education is viewed as a liberating factor in society. According to the humanistic perspective, the curriculum should address real life situations that affect the learners and their communities (Nyrere, 1968; Bacchus, 1974; Bacchus et al., 1991 and Sowell, 1996). It should also concern the aspects of life that the learners need to know about in order to grow, mature, and develop in a healthy way, so that they can contribute to nation-building in their own country. The purpose of education should be

to encourage and enhance the personal development of each individual human being. Jackson (1992:15) points out that:

> The humanistic orientation holds that the curriculum should provide personally satisfying experiences for each individual.... Humanists are self-actualizers who see the curriculum as a liberating process that can meet the needs for growth and personal integrity.

Perhaps the current concerns of the community can be brought into the school(s) and can form the basis of some lessons or projects in which students and teachers can be involved. When a problem that faces the community is studied it becomes a joint school/community effort to find solutions.

To implement a holistic curriculum, teacher education should draw upon the experiences of students, members of the community, teachers in the field, and professional experts in different areas of specialization (Sowell 1996). Drawing ideas from the societal level would help to provide a clearer picture of what should be planned for the schools. Sowell (1996:6) states that:

> Institutional curricula serve schools and are derived largely from societal curricula with modifications by local educators and laypeople. This curriculum is commonly organized according to subjects and includes the topics and themes to be studied.

Currently in Namibia the institutional curricula is written by policy makers and teacher educators. Teachers input is acknowledged at all levels, and parental input is beginning to be acknowledged at the primary level. These

official curriculum documents are subject area specific and provide goals and objectives for the learners.

The curriculum should not only involve content and skills that will enable the learners to learn effectively but it should also provide a chance for learners to interact, reflect, solve problems, experience learning, make decisions, predict, and communicate their findings to the classroom, school, and even to the community at large (Teer and Hunter, 1979; Katz and Chard, 1989; Schwartz and Pollishuke, 1990; Chard 1992, Harlen, 1993 and Rochwell et al., 1996). If the curriculum is integrated, it will help curriculum planners to create a the learner-centered program for the students and to achieve a balanced curriculum. Schwartz and Pollishuke (1990:49) state that "One of the primary goals of a child-centred approach is to encourage children to develop greater decision-making and problem-solving skills, thus promoting greater independence." If the curriculum is not meeting the needs and demands of a nation, then the quality and quantity of that education is without value. Bacchus et al., (1991:15) indicate that:

> ...when efforts at curriculum development are carried out in cooperation with the key members of the community, the outcome can be to help alleviate potential resistance to curriculum changes by increasing the perceived relevance by the parents and the pupils of the education which the schools are providing. This can help raise the level of academic achievement among pupils, lower significantly the rates of grade repetition and generally result in an overall improvement in the quality of their education.

The curriculum development unit in Namibia should involve the community in curriculum development and planning because the community is highly influential and its needs are very important. If education and the curriculum are viewed from a political perspective, then the community, the teacher, and the learners can be considered as steering organs and influential agents in curriculum implementation.

Teachers in Learner-Centered Education

The role of the teacher in learner-centered education guides the learners in acquiring new knowledge and skills. This does not mean that the teacher is the source of knowledge, but rather that s/he facilitates the learning processes of the learners. When learners come to school, they come with a certain amount of knowledge that they have acquired in their informal education and in their life cycle learning. The teacher should respect and acknowledge these informal skills, which learners have learned outside of the school situation, because they form the foundation for further learning (Greenberg, 1989 and Kindsvatter, et al. 1996). Also learning cannot take place in a vacuum, which means that, for learning to be effective, the learners should be engaged by something challenging and of interest. The teacher, in this case, has to plan activities that will motivate learning. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1994:2) points out that:

> The teacher must meet the challenges of the realities of an educational system in change and development. The teacher is a

> key person for the development of the nation, and has a lot of potential as a local resource for the community. It is therefore essential that the teacher relates closely to the community and can integrate school and life outside the school for the learner.

A teacher is an agent of change and has considerable influence over the community. The teacher should not only be able to teach the students, but should also be able to interact with the community in order to understand and know its needs. In addition, teachers should make the community at large aware of how it can potentially benefit from education. In creating opportunities for parental involvement in educational activities, teachers or teacher educators should first examine their own attitudes and practices, beliefs and biases, to see how they fit with those of the community. Human beings or even animals are influenced by the culture and environment in which they grow up or are raised in (Kellaghan et al., 1993 and Rockwell et al., 1996). Rockwell (1996:52) making suggestions as to how teacher educators can welcome different cultures into their own culture, proposes the following:

- Develop an awareness of your own cultural and family values and beliefs, and a recognition of how they influence your attitude and behaviors.
- Develop an understanding of the cultural values and lifestyle choices of your students' parents and how those values influence their attitudes and beliefs.

To successfully implement the new Namibian teacher education program that is to be free from bias, according to ethnicity, gender, and social-economic background, teachers should be knowledgeable or aware of different cultures within the community or country. The researcher believes that if schools, teachers, students/learners, communities/parents and curricula planners work together, they will form a society which has common aims and goals towards education. Dewey (1990:14) believes that "A society is a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims." He continues arguing that the common needs and aims demand a growing interchange of thoughts and growing unity of sympathetic feeling (Dewey, 1990).

There is no doubt that the new teacher education program is trying to bridge the gap that was created by the former colonial education system. This is not an easy task because more support is needed for schools, learners, teachers, and communities so that they can all work together towards the goal of effective learner-centered education. Teacher education is rapidly changing throughout the world and now seeks to avoid working in isolation. Efforts are currently being made in Namibia to train teachers who will be effective both in the classrooms and outside the school and strategies are being planned as to how the community can find its way into school classrooms, school activities, and policy making. The efficacy of the teacher

education system may be improved through discussions and sharing ideas with the community, students, teachers and teacher educators.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

This Chapter reviews the literature pertaining to learner-centered education. In order to provide the context of learner-centered education in Namibia, it is important first to give some background information about teacher training in Namibia. The definition of learner-centered education, according to Namibian policy documents, will be included. The literature review also provides the global definition of learner-centered education and discusses what the researcher feels are important elements of the learner-centered approach, namely the relationship between teaching and learning, classroom environment, group work and cooperative learning and the role of the teacher.

Teacher Training and Teacher Education in Namibia

"Teacher training" as it was referred to in colonial times was rigid because it was too authoritarian. The teachers were given a lot of power and did not encourage learners to reflect on their learning. Rowell (1995:3) further points out that the "authoritarian system of instruction fostered memorization and rote learning and inhibited independent thinking and the development of problem solving strategies." It did not prepare its

teachers to use teaching strategies that would allow learners to be critical of education issues. In fact, learners were regarded as empty vessels that needed to be filled with knowledge; the teachers were the ones who talked the most in the learning and teaching situations. Anderson et al. (1991:5) contend that:

> ...the system of teacher education in Namibia was highly inefficient also in relation to the existing school system. A high number of teachers were and are not formally qualified...[and] the rates of student failure in teacher education (were and are) abysmally high, [so that] the quality of teacher training varied very much within the country.

Teacher training also did not advocate integration of core subject areas, consequently the teachers who graduated from that education system often could not integrate subject areas across the curriculum. The system was too rigid and subject compartmentalized. As a result, most students who completed their studies could not connect the school curriculum with real life situations in the community.

During the colonial regime, there were extensive discussions on which type and quality of teacher education would suit the Black population so that upon completion of their studies, the graduates would be qualified to teach in their black communities. There were a few changes. The Lower Primary Teacher's Certificate (LPTC) was introduced to specifically qualify a person to teach in the lower primary phase. This course was offered for a while, after which the authorities decided to introduce another course. In

reality, they were only changing the titles of the course, whereas the course content and methodology remained the same. The course that followed was "Primary Teachers Certificate" (P.T.C.), which was offered along with the "Junior Secondary Teachers Certificate" (JSTC) for a duration of one year. Within a short period of time, these courses were abolished and a new programme the "Education Certificate Primary" (ECP), was introduced in the early 1980's. This was the program in which the researcher was trained. It was a two year program, during which time all student teachers were required to take half the matriculation subjects and half of the professional courses. Not long after the ECP was abolished, two new teacher training programs were introduced. These two programs introduced towards the end of the South African occupation, were "National High Education Certificate" (NHEC), a two year program that trained teachers for the junior secondary schools and the National Education Certificate" (NEC), a three year program that trained primary teachers (Cohen, 1994; Dahlstrom, 1995 and Nyambe, 1996).

As mentioned earlier, colonial education in Namibia was fragmented and based on the ethnicity of the Namibian population. Facilities also varied according to race. For example, most rural schools did not receive maximum attention from the government because these were mainly schools for Blacks. Most of the schools for Blacks had major problems with school facilities. Learners had to share textbooks and had no libraries or

science laboratories. The Front-line Teacher (1992:34) indicated that "in grade 1 there were 107 pupils... some sat on the floor. Indeed it was hard for a teacher to move about. It was a Bible lesson.... The only material was the Bible text which the teacher consulted." The lack of materials affected most schools for Blacks, and the high failure rate reflected the fact that certain schools used outdated books and syllabi. Totemeyer (1994) pointed out that the uneven distribution of school materials contributed to the high failure rates in most schools. After independence in 1990, the new government inherited this poverty in schools to the extent that, even today, many schools still have poor facilities.

Although changes following independence are gradually occurring, some aspects of the former education system, other than poor facilities, still remain. In some schools today, corporal punishment is still being used in both primary and secondary schools and although there have been some changes in integration, these have been only in the area of regional integration but not racial integration. For example, before independence there were five teacher training colleges in Namibia, formerly South West Africa. Three of these colleges were located in northern Namibia with the student population consisting entirely of Black students. The other two teacher training colleges, one for Coloreds and one for whites, were located in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia. After independence in 1990 the new teacher education system was designed to integrate students from all

ethnic backgrounds and regions. However, while colleges have successfully integrated students from different regions, they have failed to integrate students from different ethnic groups. Currently the three northern colleges are still comprised of Black students. The two colleges in Windhoek have been combined into a single college, comprised of Blacks and Colored students. White students now attend teacher training facilities in South Africa. Full racial integration of students has not been successful.

Before independence students from each college were from the same region, i.e. students from Oshakati attended only at Ongwediva Teacher Training College. Currently students from different regions who would not have been admitted previously, attend the college which is now named Ongwediva College of Education.

The Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD)

Since independence the term "teacher training" is no longer used and has been replaced with the term "teacher education." The current teacher education program entitled the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) is a three year program that was implemented into the Namibia's colleges of education in 1993. The goal is to create a national and common teacher education for Basic Education related to the needs of the nation, the local community, the school, the learner and the teacher. The Namibian education system endorsed the philosophy of "learner-Centered Education,"

a philosophy in which the new teacher education program prepares student teachers, so that, when they complete their training they should be able to use a democratic teaching approach in the schools.

One aim of the new BETD teacher education program is to train teachers to be able to use various teaching strategies that are more learner-centered. In the policy directive Towards Education for All (1993:76), it is stated that:

> Effective learning is more than simply gathering and memorising information. Learners must become skilled at using information not only in school or other education programmes but throughout their lives.... They must as well become skilled in determining what information they need to address a particular problem and in gathering that information.

The new teacher education program advocates moving from a teacher centered approach to a learner-centered approach that aims to meet the needs of the learners. (See Appendix A for the aims, structure and admission requirements for the new BETD teacher education program).

Namibian Learner-Centered Education

Learner-centered education is a new teaching philosophy which the Ministry of Education and Culture (1992) has adapted to the Namibian situation. This teaching and learning philosophy allows the learners to interact with the materials, their fellow learners, the teacher, and community in an effective way. In addition, learner-centered education focuses on the learning progression of learners.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (1992:7) views learner-centered education as follows:

> Learner centered education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learners as individuals, valuing their own life experiences, knowledge and skills as a starting point for the teaching and learning processes.

This means that teachers should be open to their learners, and teachers should understand and appreciate the way that students learn. By knowing how learners learn, the teacher has the opportunity to select suitable content for his or her learners.

The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1994:2) states that, in learner-centered education:

> Teachers should be able to select content and methods on the basis of a shared analysis of the learner's needs, use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready-made study materials, and thus develop their own and the learner's creativity. A learner-centered approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production.

The pilot project Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education (1996:23) makes the following comments about learner-centered education:

> Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning processes, and the teaching methods used should be chosen to encourage the active involvement and participation of the learners. Teachers should structure lessons appropriately for each task. There should be variation in the organisation of the class according to which will be optimal for the task in hand: individual work, work in pairs, small groups, larger groups or whole class. There should be variation between teacher directed work, teacher facilitated, and learner directed

> work, depending on which is the most effective in relation to the learning objectives and content of the lesson.

The Namibian educational policy perceives learner-centered education as a transformative democratic pedagogy that emphasizes interactive learning and teaching, thus promoting understanding, creativity and productivity in the learning process. Learner-centered education is also viewed as a liberating pedagogy that gives learners freedom of expression and enhanced ability to reflect on their own learning. Furthermore, learner-centered education should give learners the capacity to be critical-minded and to develop solutions to problems that affect their social, economic, and political situations.

It is also helpful to view Namibian learner-centered education from both the socialistic and humanistic point of view which are concerned with society and the progression of individuals toward a better life situation. From the socialistic view, learner-centered education integrates society into the school curriculum because society at large should be made aware of the current situation in schools and should be concerned about the education of children. Societal involvement as such, can be a reality when society is transformed and empowered, for example through nonformal education and literacy programs. In this context, learner-centered education is moving away from "elite group education" to mass education or education for all. In

the directive policy document Towards Education for All (1993:89), it indicates clearly that:

> ... we need ... recognise the value of integrating into our school curriculum life skills, practical subjects, and pre-vocational themes and experiences. A pre-vocational curriculum does not seek to equip students with the sorts of skills that would enable them to enter skilled employment without further training. Rather, its goal is to enable all students to develop an appreciation of the skills and attitudes appropriate to the work setting they will encounter in their adult lives.

As mentioned in the conceptual framework of the study, one intention of learner-centered education is to integrate or bridge the gap between school and society, so that both have a common understanding of education. Callewaert and Kallos (1992:17) in the Namibian document, Outline of a Philosophy of Education, define learner-centered education:

> ... a learner-centered pedagogy regards the child as active and curious, striving to acquire knowledge and skills to master its surrounding world and able to do so under certain circumstances. The ensuing pedagogy is accordingly adapted to the experiences of each learner as a starting point for the teaching process. The necessary pedagogy is flexible and highly individualised in terms of content, methods of instruction and pacing.

The democratic pedagogy of learner-centered education rejects the authoritarian pedagogical stance of a teaching and learning that emphasizes memorization and recall of learned facts and paragraphs and centers more on the teacher than on the learners. In contrast, the leaner-centered approach focuses more on learner participation in learning activities. In addition, learner-centered education gives learners the freedom to question

what they learn, why they learn it, how they learn it, and how the teacher is presenting it to them. This democratic approach allows the learners to evaluate what they learn; at the same time, the learners evaluate how the teachers teach and give them feedback about the teaching and learning. Pomuti (1996:3) in her Module 1 of the In-service BETD, Education Theory and Practice: Learner-Centered Education, believes that:

> Learner-centered education places the activities of the learners in the center of every lesson. In planning a learner-centered lesson, teachers have to plan for the activities to involve all the learners during the lesson, instead of planning for what the teacher will say and do.

Meanwhile Sibuku (1997) cited Nyambe (1993:2) in his report on Learner-Centered Methods, that:

> The basis for learner-centered methods is that knowledge is not a finished entity or something that is done and is therefore closed. It is not a package which one can simply hand over to someone to receive passively. Knowledge is a process of continuous construction. The fact that knowledge is a matter of human construction entails that learners are never left out in such a process. Learner centered methods therefore entail that learners are given the opportunity to identify a problem in a guided manner to explore, investigate, analyzes, extrapolate, share, debate, discover and experiment. Learner Centered methods call for pupil active participation in the teaching learning situation. In such classroom situations learners are more active than the teacher. The role of the teacher is to guide and facilitate the learning process. When planning and presenting lessons the learner's individual needs, potentials, abilities, etc. are taken into consideration. The individual learner's needs, learning pace, abilities, potentials, etc. are major determinants of what activities to plan for the lesson. The teacher is expected to treat learners as individuals and they should not be expected to advance at the same pace.

The teacher does not teach to cover the syllabus but to help the child develop and realize his potential. Learner centered methods include methods like project work, group discussions, dramatisation, experimentation, diary writing, etc. While Zimba (1995:83) in his paper Learner-Centered Education in the context of (H) IGCSE [1], which he presented at the colloquium on teacher education, in Namibia, defines learner-centered education in the following terms:

"Arising from the preceding conceptions of education, learner-centered education could be defined as that education in which":

- teaching and learning are based on students' experiential, developmental and scholastic background, interests, goals, hopes, aptitudes and learning needs;
- students are considered as active participants and partners in their own education;
- students and teachers are co-learners and co-teachers;
- the major task is that of striving for understanding, competencies, knowledge, skill mastery and application, and the quest for excellence;
- the continued and interactive growth, development, learning and intellectual emancipation of students and their teachers are emphasized;

[1] IGCSE stands for International General Certificate for Secondary Education, which is equivalent to grade 12.

- students and teachers are supposed to reconcile their different perceptions and views of reality, preoccupation, doubts, needs, problems, hopes and fears and come up with a negotiated conception of their shared understanding, purposes, visions and goals;
- reflective learning and teaching are not ignored.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (1990) views learner-centered education as comprised of the following aspects:

- the learners as individuals must be accepted and acknowledged.
- learners' knowledge and experiences, both at home and school, must be accepted and built on as a good starting point for knowledge.
- the learners should be exposed to the world in order to encourage them to investigate and carry out experiments.
- learners should be empowered with knowledge and skills in order to promote creative and independent thinking.
- learners should be involved in collaborative, cooperative effort with others, so that they can share their learning with others, rather than merely receive the products of education.

From this perspective, learners are considered as human beings who can contribute to the development of their education. Taking into account the life experiences of learners will help teachers to better understand how learners create meaning.

It is felt that the learner-centered approach in Namibian education will allow the learners to explore and investigate issues and enable them to work even in conditions where there are no ready-made materials. It is hoped this approach will motivate the learners, along with their teachers, to be creative and produce more teaching materials from the available local materials (Ministry of Education and, Culture 1990).

The definitions of learner-centered education in the Namibian context indicate that there is a common goal in wishing to involve the learners in many aspects of the teaching and learning activities. In this conception, the teacher becomes both a teacher and a learner while the learner too is a learner and a teacher. Members of the community are also viewed as resource persons in the schools, meaning that, in a professional sense, they are teachers as well.

Learner-Centered Education in General

Teer and Hunter (1979) point out that learner-centered education is a teaching philosophy incorporating a particular set of convictions about the ways in which learning can take place. Teer and Hunter (1979:2) indicate that:

> What the learners see or hear or understand will be influenced more by their experience than by any teacher's intentions. Whatever the teacher presents will be changed to fit into the learner's already constructed way of seeing the world.

This means that in learner-centered education the teachers should be able to find ways to individualize their teaching in order to meet the needs of their learners. This can be achieved if teachers individualize learning and teaching by placing themselves in the role of the learners and then teaching in such a way as to benefit the learners. Better understanding of the learner can help teachers to structure their teaching to meet the needs of the individual learner. Teaching is a challenging profession, but, at the same time, it is a learning experience for the teachers. In order for teachers to understand how the learner learns, they need to explore and become familiar with the world of their learners. In the process, teachers too will learn and discover many things that will help their professional development.

Teachers should open up teaching avenues so that learners are able to learn and acquire knowledge in various ways. In a humanistic learner-centered education, the teacher will of course teach while the learners learns. In a true democratic pedagogy, the learners will also teach in which case the teacher will become a learner. The teacher should learn from his or her learners how they manipulate what they learn in order to understand it, and teachers can also benefit from listening to the learners when they teach their fellow learners (Wilson, 1972; Pine and Boy, 1977; Teer and Hunter, 1979 and Schrenko, 1994).

Teer and Hunter (1979:2) maintain that "learner-centered education focuses on learning, not on teaching. It forces the teacher to be aware of what is really happening in the group and to value change and growth in the learners." Farrant (1980:127) defines learner-centered education as a:

> ... philosophical approach to school that recognises the importance of matching the content and methods of children's learning to what is known of child development and the basic needs and characteristics of children.

Farrant (1980) believes that a teacher should be a model to the learners. Theory and practice should match in order to avoid imbalances in what learners learn. In matching theory with practice, the teacher should use appropriate teaching methods that help learners to be able to reflect on their own learning. In Kindervatter's (1977) perception of learner-centered education, even though she views it from a general standpoint, she indicates that the learner-centered approaches vary widely but that the different views of learner-centered education involving a common understanding. Kindervatter (1977:3) defines learner-centered education in the following terms:

- Content and objectives based on learner's needs and presented from the learner perspective;
- Methods which capitalize active participation and interaction of the learners rather than passive information gathering;

- Materials that provoke and pose problems, rather than provide answers;
- Teachers who are not teachers but facilitators, and learning which is not only cognitive, but also leads to new awareness and behaviors in the learners' lives.

Shiundu and Omulando (1992) viewed learner-centered education not as content-free, but rather as putting emphasis on the learner, paying attention to the individual learner's development, interests, and needs. They further indicate that learner-centered education draws on theories of human development and learning. By making the learner the center of the curriculum process, his or her active participation in the learning process becomes the main focus of these learning theories.

In general, the proponents of learner-centered education view society/community in extremely democratic terms and perceive the individual human being as a 'naturally good' and sacred entity. Shiundu and Omulando (1992:111) contend that "The individual child should be allowed to develop the capacity for individual self expression. This is possible... when the curriculum is developed around the needs, interests and experiences of the child." The traditional teacher domination is minimized by learner-centered education, which allows learners the freedom of active participation in their own learning process and promotes creativity, which is important for human growth and development. In

addition, Shiundu and Omulando (1992:111) outline the characteristics of learner-centered education as follows:

- It takes organizational cues from individual students rather than from content. The learner is the starting point, the centre, and the end of school activities.
- It takes into account learners' needs, interests and experiences.
- It is highly flexible, making many options available for learners.
- Ideally, the learners are supposed to plan their own curriculum, usually with various degrees of teacher input.
- Learners are instructed individually at appropriate points.

Teer and Hunter (1979:3) state that:

> In learner-centered education, the aim is to do everything possible to help the learners assimilate what they are learning and relate it to other respects of their lives. The materials then become their own. They are experiencing, not memorizing its meanings.

In this conception, learner-centered education implies that teaching and learning take place through listening, asking, experimenting, exploring, problems solving, and assessing the learning situation.

Teaching and Learning

The concept of teaching and learning means different things to teachers and their students. It can be defined in different ways depending on

the environment, the availability of materials and resources, and the number of students in the classrooms. "Learning" is a difficult concept to define, even though many people, for example teachers, parents, and society at large want their children to "learn" effectively. Scholars such as Logan and Gordon (1981), Harlen (1992), and Chard (1992) argue that learning cannot be studied in isolation. This means that for a teacher or anyone else to know what learning is all about, he or she must study learning through the behaviors of the learners. These scholars further argue that behavior is more than just learning. Learning can be a hypothetical process in the sense that it can be inferred from observations of the learners' behaviors when they are engaged in activities. Logan and Gordon (1981:5) define learning as a: "permanent process resulting from experience with some task and reflected in a change in performance under appropriate circumstances." King and Janzen, (1994) and Kellough and Kellough, (1996) refer to learning as a way in which learners acquire new skills through practical participation in activities. Chard (1992) sees teaching and learning as an interactive process that results from the learning experiences of the learners. Based on the above perceptions of learning, it is understandable that for "learning" to be meaningful, the learners have to be involved in their learning activities and should be responsible for their learning. In addition, these definitions imply that the main focus in the teaching and learning situation should be on the "learner" because he or she comes to school to learn new skills and to

be assisted in understanding and interpreting his or her environment. Harlen (1992:16) states that:

> In their early experiences of the world, pupils develop ideas which enable them to make sense of the things that happen around them. They bring these informal ideas into the classroom and the aim of... education is to give pupils more explanatory power so that their ideas can become useful concepts...

This concept of accepting learners' experiences is another method of promoting "democratic pedagogy," which implies breaking away from the "authoritarian pedagogy" in which textbooks and teachers are treated as the only source of information and knowledge. If this authoritarian pedagogy is used in the classroom, the learners will generally become passive, dormant, inactive recipients of knowledge (Callos and Callewaert, 1992; Ministry of education and culture, 1990; Tobin, 1994 and Rowell 1995).

The main issue in teaching and learning is the "learner" and to have effective teaching strategies in any classroom, every teacher should ask himself or herself this question: How would I like to be taught if I were a student or learner? This question can help teachers to teach others, particularly learners, the way they themselves would like to be taught should they happen to be learners. As Rowell (1995:7) states:

> In a learner-centred pedagogy, the role of the teacher becomes that of mediator of learning experiences in which the learners generate meaning rather one of transmitter of knowledge to the learners.

This implies that within the learner-centered approach the teacher guides the learners in their learning. They are given opportunities to express their views in group discussions and to share their experiences and findings with other learners. This will enable the learners to clarify their point of views by elaborating, justifying and evaluating the alternative points of view. Tobin (1994:49) state that:

> As a mediator, the teacher must ensure that students are given opportunities for quality learning experiences to provide a solid base for learning with understanding. This requires that teachers constantly learn about which learning experiences would be the most appropriate for their students.

From a learner-centred curriculum, teachers can facilitate learning by directing experiences, so that learners can have opportunities to build on their extant knowledge. This will also help the learners to be self-reliant and reflective in regard to activities in and outside the school setting. In addition, this is one of the ways that teachers can adapt the content and teaching method(s) to the individual learners. Harlen (1992) and Wade et al. (1995) point out that, within a constructivist learning situation, learners can be exposed to process skills that can help them to utilize their existing ideas in order to understand new experiences. Process skills, including hypothesizing, observing, predicting, investigating, interpreting, drawing conclusions, and communicating findings, can be more fully explored if the learner-centred approach is used in teaching and learning situations. The learning process is more important than the product because the process

shows the systematic ways in which a student learns. Furthermore, the process illustrates the developmental learning stages of the learners and helps the teacher to know the different learning styles of each individual student. In order to be able to achieve this, however, teachers need to choose appropriate teaching strategies, student activities, and evaluation procedures.

Classroom Environment and Motivation

If the learning environment is not conducive to learning, the students may not be motivated, which will affect their participation in class activities. Hebert et al. (1994:78) state: "Classroom climate and environment-the psychological and physical elements that make up classroom 'surrounding' largely determine how children regard their educational experiences." The classroom climate should evolve from an atmosphere and environment in which students and teachers work together, interact, and learn together. Scholars such as Hebert et al. (1994) and Walsh (1995) assert that classroom climate also involves effective group discussions, interpersonal communications within groups, individual reflections, classroom organization and management, and considerations of motivation. In a learner-centered approach, a positive classroom climate should evolve from a warm, and caring attitude that begins with the teachers. Teachers should be models to the students and should foster a

warm, positive classroom that will be conducive to learners and encourage them to learn without fear.

Motivation is also an important aspect of the learner-centered approach. As Hebert et al. (1994:81) states:

> Elements that promote motivation include modeling and teaching enthusiasm for learning, interesting subject matter and lesson delivery, a variety and choice of tasks appropriate to students' learning levels, and prompt feedback... teachers should also model and promote experiences of the personal satisfaction in achievement that is the basis of self-motivation and its intrinsic reward.

Group Work and Cooperative Learning

One common strategy frequently associated with the learner-centered approach is the use of group work and/ or cooperative learning. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) believe that one dimension of group work is the development of "self-concept" of the individual learners. It is believed that self-esteem is enhanced when learners work in groups because they support one another. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992:18) support the above statement by indicating that "This appears to be true for very young infants, children, and adolescents, as well as for adults of all ages." When learners rely on others for the gratification and rewards, it helps them to feel worthwhile and esteemed.

Group work promotes learner participation because learners share ideas and can discuss points of disagreement. As Nunan (1988) points out, learners with particular needs can be more easily identified when students

work in groups. Through group work, the slower learners can benefit from interacting with others and are thus encouraged to cooperate or improve in areas in which they have problems. At times, learners learn best when they listen to themselves or learn from their peer group, as opposed to learn from a teacher. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992:17) state that:

> The increasing complexity of social conditions and the large concentrations of people have brought to the forefront the need for and importance of learning to work effectively in groups. Contemporary life places a premium on citizens to relate well to others.

The learners can learn to work alongside other learners from different backgrounds, races, cultures and religions. When learners work cooperatively, they tend to learn about and become familiar with other peoples' norms. This may compel the learners to deal with interpersonal tensions and conflicts among groups members (Nunan, 1988 and Harlen, 1992). Harlen (1992:134) indicates that, "Groups of four are ideal for the youngest children but juniors can be in groups as large as six if this is necessary, although a smaller number is desirable." How learners are grouped can be determined by the teacher. Some teachers group the learners according to their level of achievement, but the outcomes of such grouping should also be considered. Students should not know that teachers are classing them into clusters based on their capabilities or performances. Mixed groups are effective because the learners will tend to motivate one another. Harlen (1992:134) wrote, "Children of differing abilities would

work together easily, they only needed to be able to communicate with each other." Group work can also help the teacher to complete tasks on time because sub-topics can be presented to the groups for discussion. Gorman (1969 and 1974) stresses three effects which are clearly noticeable when learners learn cooperatively in groups:

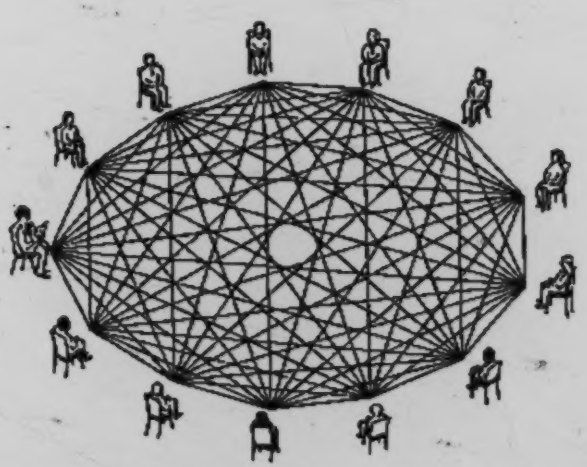
First, the learners generate interpersonal feelings and intellectual responses to concepts and facts. As a result communication among the learners is enlivened. Secondly, the learners can express their feelings openly to others, for discussion. This can help other learners to learn how to deal with their own emotions. It can also help them to deal with emotions amongst themselves when they are in groups with other learners. In this way, learners can avoid passing on distorted information. Thirdly, this approach can assist learners to be self-directing, self-motivating and to discipline themselves in a humanistic manner. Gorman (1974:81) indicates that:

> While sharing the power and responsibilities of leadership may be difficult at first for those who have been conditioned to be passive and dependent, people can learn to function in a participative, democratic way with guidance from their teacher.

When learners are divided in groups, they are encouraged to acquire leadership responsibilities and are learning to be accountable for their own learning and that of others.

Although Figure 2 represents a group larger than most recommended sizes, it does illustrate group dynamics, or the active participation of each group member in communicating with each other.

Figure 2 Group Communication Pattern



Source: Gorman, A. H. (1974:38). Teacher and Learners: The Alternative Process of Education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

It is a fact that peer interaction is promoted in group work and cooperative learning. By working together, close friends can help their fellow students to overcome anxiety and loneliness in a large or complex school. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992:20) state that:

> Peers can be particularly influential, whether that influential is positive or ... malignant, in shaping the group processes of a classroom. Peers provide emotional support as students attempt to break loose from dependency...

However, peer interaction can also threaten other learners by making the learning environment uncomfortable for other learners. When peers are interacting in school activities, the teacher is accountable for any outcome from the group; the teacher should bear his or her responsibility to make sure that learning is taking place without any interruptions. In addition, the teacher should guide the learners in their activities. When learners are working in groups or have project, the presence of the teacher should make a difference, because teachers can help and encourage other learners to work in harmony with other learners. As learners can influence the behavior and attitude of other learners, teachers should be conscious of the attitudes of learners in order to encourage them to work along with others.

Cooperative learning is one of the teaching strategies that engage students in both social and academic learning. Bennett and Smilanich (1994:116) indicate that:

> Cooperative learning can be considered an instructional strategy if the group process is attending to the social theory upon which it is constructed. The process of cooperative learning deals with how to structure groups so they function effectively.

It is likely that cooperative learning will encourage more social interaction at a complex level, whereby learners will investigate the complexity of the tasks. This approach not only encourages group discussion but also encourages learners to use social skills and theory related to resolution of conflicts and misbehaviors of other learners.

Questioning Technique as a Teaching Strategy

The questioning technique is another aspect of learner-centered education. The essence of discovery and inquiry in the learning environment is to facilitate student-centered instruction. The questioning technique also gives sufficient guidance that can ensure clear direction and success in the individual learning of the learners. It can help the teacher to give the learner a sense of direction on what is taught. Sund and Trowbridge (1974:57) indicate that:

> Proper questioning is a sophisticated teaching art. To practice it, a teacher must perceive where the thought of the students are and be continually open so that they can perceive well. By doing this, the instructor must switch from the classical concept of teaching-telling to listening and questioning. After perceiving the student's difficulty, he has to formulate a question so as to challenge yet give guidance to the student.

In order to achieve the intended goal using the questioning technique, the teacher should prepare the questions ahead of time. This will help the teacher to refine the questions so that they should not appear ambiguous to the students. It is advisable for the teacher to know what he or she wants the students to learn, so that the questions can be adapted to the students' level of cognitive thinking. In accordance with this argument, Sund and Trowbridge (1974:58) state that:

> Questioning may be pre-planned before class or allowed to arise spontaneously because of student interaction. It is always wise to plan a series of questions before you enter an inquiry oriented class... this contributes better to your questioning ability.

This means that having thought about which questions to use in the classroom may give the teacher a sense of security and direction that will contribute to better class discussions. However, when using the questioning technique in learner-centered education, the teacher has the flexibility to deviate from the original questions and formulate new ones as classroom interaction is going on. The questioning method will also expose learners to convergent and divergent type of questions; the learners will not only give a wide range of responses, but also become more critical and creative thinkers in answering certain questions that might compel them to use their common sense. Sund and Trowbridge (1974:64) argue that:

> The fundamental purposes of using the inquiry approach is to stimulate and develop critical thinking, creative behavior, and multiple talents... In an inquiry investigation getting the right answer is as important as giving the student a chance to use his mind so that he may become more of a person.

If teachers create a situation where their learners can learn to think creatively and comfortably, they inculcate in their learners a sense and awareness of self-concepts. They also develop a positive feeling about the teacher and the subject of study. However, those teachers who are mainly concerned with getting the right answers inhibit learners from thinking and using their freedom to express themselves independently. When learners give the wrong answers, at least it constitutes a liberated expression of what they have discussed in the class or elsewhere. It is important to note that

"thinking" in a learning situation is just as important as giving the right answer. When a learner "thinks" and gives a wrong answer, it helps the teacher to gain a better understanding of that learner, as far as the subject is concerned, and also gives the teacher a starting point for working with that particular learner (Means, 1968; Sund and Trowbridge, 1974 and McIntyre, 1990). The questioning technique can help teachers to ascertain a learner's interests and values and his or her attitudes towards the subject, teacher, and fellow learners. In addition, this technique is effective in teaching because it helps the teacher to facilitate the individual learning of the learners. The inquiry teaching technique involves the learners in the process of actively learning, for example through understanding a problem, outlining experiments, forming hypotheses, interpreting data and information, and drawing their own conclusions.

Role of the Teacher in Learner-Centered Education

One of the roles of the teacher in learner-centered education is to assist the learners to see the relationship between what they learn and what is going on outside the classroom. In addition, the teacher should help the learners to relate what they see, hear and learn at school to what is happening in the community where they live and to help the learners interpret their experiences and make connections between their culture and their formal education (Farrant, 1980). However, teachers should not feel

threatened by the concept of "learner-centered education," thinking perhaps that it implies that the learners are taking away the responsibilities of the teachers. In fact, a learner-centered education implies that teachers have more responsibilities in that they are held accountable for the outcome of the learning experiences of the learners. Also, the concept of learner-centered education implies that instead of having teachers perform roles and activities for the learners, the learners should be now be responsible for carrying out these activities while the teachers monitor how well the learners are performing those activities.

Another role of the teacher is that of manager of the learning and teaching situation. Teachers should make sure that all the materials and resources needed for the lesson or for the education of the learners are available. They should also help the learners to manage their time and show them how to plan their programs. Farrant (1980:6) indicates that the teacher "is a resource person providing his/her students with information and able to give guide them to other fruitful sources."

Teachers should be able to facilitate the learning of the learners in a fruitful manner by organizing learning activities and making sure that learning is taking place. They should make sure that the lesson and the associated activities are of interest to the learners, so that they are motivated to learn. For the learners to be motivated, the teachers themselves should be motivated and should be a model to the learners. It is important to bear

in mind that teaching is an art that depends on how teachers would like to teach; at times, the nature of teaching comes to resemble the attitude of the teacher (Alexiou, 1995 and Pomuti, 1996).

Communication between the teacher and the learner is extremely important, and the teacher should keep the communication process positive and alive. Poor communication can affect the performance of learners, especially if the teacher and the learner are on bad terms or if the teacher uses unclear language. In addition, communication must go beyond the classroom and the school premises, extendition, communication must go beyond the classroom and the school premises, extending as far as the community in which the children live. The teacher should communicate with the parents of the children in order to keep them informed about the performance of their children in school. If there is positive communication both in the classroom and in the community, the teacher and parents can work together in order to help promote the individuality of each child, so that his or her unique characteristics can be recognized and acknowledged both at school and the community.

It is the teachers' responsibility to guide the learning process and to assist learners when they face problems in their tasks. The teacher should also be able to guide learners in acquiring the social skills that are necessary to help settle conflicts at school and in the community; these skills will help the learners to grow up to be responsible adults and loyal citizens who will

be in a position to constructively take part in nation building. If learners are exposed to techniques for resolving conflicts, and are familiar with strategies for collaboration amongst themselves and others, they will be more capable of dealing with the conflict faced in their own country (Alexander, 1990; Callahan et al. 1995 and Alexiou, 1995). Alexiou (1995:23) points out that:

> The stress children feel from conflict situations will always have some impact on other areas of their lives. Children need reassurance that they can deal with any situation that arises. They need to be encouraged to see themselves as capable problem solvers ...adults must teach children the skills necessary to solve conflicts.

This is another role that teachers should play in addition to structuring the learning to make it effective and meaningful. Teachers should assist the learners to become responsible citizens who will foster the constitution of their own country and hopefully be able to resolve conflicts through negotiations and collaboration. By presenting the learners with the tasks of conflict resolution, the teacher can prepare the learners to be able to handle their own problems and those of others. Efforts to improve conflict resolution can be implemented if teachers and the community work together in partnership (Anderson, 1993 and Alexiou, 1995). The effectiveness of any education system is critically affected by the degree of open communication among teachers, school, the community and learners.

There are many roles for the teacher in a learner-centered approach, but one of the problems in moving from a teacher directed approach to a

learner-centered approach as Rayn (1995:31) points out is that "Teachers teach the way they were taught, regardless of training, due to their isolation and lack of power to engage in meaningful dialogue, or to make change in curriculum, goal or outcomes."

It is indeed a real challenge for Namibian student teachers to move from the teacher directed approach that dominated their education to teach in a learner-centered environment of the future.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This chapter entails a discussion of the study's research design and methodology. The researcher decided to use qualitative research, specifically making use of a case study method. Charles (1995) points out that qualitative research attempts to capture and draw its conclusions from a broad rather than a narrowly defined picture of human behavior. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:2) indicate that when using qualitative research "The researcher is bent on understanding in considerable detail how people such as teachers, principals and students think and how they came to develop the perspectives they hold."

The aim of this study was to discover the perceptions of learner-centered education held by the lecturers and student teachers and the learner-centered strategies they utilized in their teaching. The researcher was aware that a quantitative approach seemed to be inadequate for describing human behavior and its cultural dimension. Therefore, to achieve the purpose of this study, the researcher specifically adopted a

qualitative case study approach because it provides more information and a more intensive detailed examination of the group.

Borg and Gall (1989:403) indicate that a case study approach "provides an intensive, detailed examination of a single subject or group, phenomenon, or social unit." Merriam (1988:9) defines a case study as "an examination of a specific phenomenon such a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group." Best and Kahn (1993:193) view a case study as:

> ... a way of organizing social data for the purpose of viewing social reality. It examines a social unit as a whole. The unit may be a person, a family, a social group, a social institution, or a community. The purpose is to understand the life cycle or an important part of the life cycle of the unit. The case study probes deeply and analyzes interactions between the factors that explain present status or that influence change or growth.

This research constitutes a case study in that it focused on one college, Ongwediva College of Education, and attempted to examine a new program in greater depth. Various forms of inquiry were used such as interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis in order to go into greater depth and to get as much detail as possible regarding the new teacher education program. These techniques of data collection are also commonly found in ethnographic research which Anderson (1990:148) defines as "the research technique of direct observation of human activity and interaction in an ongoing and naturalistic setting." While this study is not considered an ethnography due to its short duration of four months, it does however

use some of the common ethnographic tools. By using a variety of sources for data collection such as observations, informal conversations, interviews, field notes and document analysis, the researcher attempted to enhance the validity of the data. An attempt was made to triangulate almost all of the information gathered from the study. The researcher also hoped to increase the reliability by having multiple interviews and observations for the lecturers and student teachers.

Methodology

Setting of the Study

The Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) is offered in all four of Namibia's Colleges of Education. These colleges are as follows: Caprivi College of Education (CCE), Rundu College of Education (RCE), Ongwediva College of Education (OCE), and Windhoek College of Education (WCE). This study was conducted at Ongwediva College of Education in Oshakati, northern Namibia, over a period of four months from May to August, 1996. Ongwediva College was chosen as the physical site for the study because that is where the researcher had been working as a lecturer and had already established a rapport with the college staff. The researcher also knew some of the student teachers and teachers from the surrounding schools.

As mentioned previously Ongwdiva College of Education is located in northern Namibia. This region comprises half of the Namibian

population (1 574 927). The college admits students from this region and from other surrounding regions. In 1996 the college had 816 student teachers, 369 females and 447 males, and a faculty comprised of 59 people, 26 females and 31 males. The Rector and Vice-Rector who are included in this total are both males. The student enrollment and faculty make Ongwediva College the largest teacher education college in Namibia. Although student teachers come from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority are from the working class families with a few from the middle class families. All Namibian student teachers admitted to the college are on government scholarships and live in dormitories surrounding the college. (See Appendix B for organizational structure of the college and 1996 demographic information regarding college staff and students).

The Researcher's Role

While the researcher was working at Ongwediva College of Education as lecturer from January 1993 to December 1994, he was involved with the BETD program. The researcher felt somewhat uncomfortable with the learner-centered approach because he was unaware of what was expected, however, he thought it had potential. Other lecturers and student teachers held similar views toward the learner-centered approach.

When the researcher joined graduate studies at the University of Alberta in Canada he observed a variety of classes and noticed many

teaching strategies being used that he thought were learner-centered. There was greater student participation and more interaction between instructors and students than he had ever observed before. There also appeared to be more flexibility in accepting the student's views. The researcher also observed the use of "community" expertise by experiencing a variety of speakers in several courses. This caused him to become excited and interested about the possibilities for a learner-centered approach at Ongwediva College of Education. The researcher recognizes that his perceptions of the learner-centered approach have been shaped by his personal experiences in Namibia, as a lecturer, and at the University of Alberta as a graduate student, and therefore he brings a certain bias to this study. Although the researcher hopes to be objective, it is recognized that his bias towards the learner-centered approach shapes the way he views, understands and interprets the data.

One of the reasons Ongwediva College of Education was chosen as the site for the study was because the researcher was familiar with the Rector, most of the lecturers and many of the student teachers. He also knew some of the teachers from surrounding schools and some personnel who worked for the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. By previously establishing a rapport with many of the participants the researcher's level of comfort during the four months he spent conducting his research was greatly increased.

Before conducting the research, the study was approved by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. The Rector was then contacted by both the researcher and the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. The Rector agreed to allow the research to be conducted. The researcher personally knew all the lecturers and most of the student teachers in the study. He also knew four of the five Ministry personnel and some of the teachers in the schools. The level of rapport that had previously been established was very beneficial. Throughout the four months of data collection, the researcher immersed himself daily in college or school life. In addition, to interviewing and observing the participants who volunteered for the study, he spoke informally to other lecturers, student teachers and teachers. He also attended functions such as staff meetings, professional development workshops and socialized with lecturers and student teachers on several occasions. During these times the researcher continued to keep field notes to increase his understanding of the learner-centered approach.

The Sampling Procedures

The initial target of the study was to be a sample of lecturers and student teachers at Ongwediva College of Education. However, the researcher felt that it was also important to include interviews with some of the education officers who are heading the education reforms at the

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. In addition, since the third year student teachers (BETD III) were doing their teaching practice in the second term (June-August, 1996), the researcher had the opportunity to follow the student teachers to the schools and possibly interview some of the teachers who were working with student teachers in their respective schools. He felt it would be interesting to note their views toward learner-centered education. Therefore the researcher also included interviews with teachers and Ministry personnel in the data collection.

Lecturers

When the researcher arrived at the college he shared his research with the Rector of the college. As part of the ethical guidelines, the Rector had previously given his consent for the research and was informed that the study would include some college lecturers and some student teachers. He (Rector) suggested that the researcher attend a meeting already scheduled for the lecturers regarding college information, to share information about his study. About 30 lecturers attended the meeting. They were informed about the nature of the study and of its voluntary and confidential aspects. The researcher also informed the lecturers that the study required four lecturers to be participants. The following day six lecturers approached the researcher individually and volunteered to be in the study, four females and two

males. Three of these six lecturers, two females and a male, also held part time administrative positions at the college.

The six lecturers possessed a variety of teaching experiences and all had been working with the college of education for more than five years. Five of them held a Bachelor's of education degree which meets the qualification to teach at the teacher education college, and the other lecturer held a Master of Education degree which s/he acquired outside Namibia. All six lecturers had varied teaching experience. Four out of six lecturers taught both primary and secondary schools before they were appointed as lecturers at the teacher education college and the remaining two had only taught in the secondary schools before they were appointed lectures. Four of the lecturers were native Namibians and two of them were White expatriates.

The lecturer's age ranged from 33-40. Some of lecturers who participated in the study had children. Three of the lecturers were married with children and one was a single parent with one child. Two of them were single and without children.

Student Teachers

At the time the study was conducted, the final year students (BETD III), who were the target group, were out for the entire term on their School Based Studies (SBS), which is teaching practice in the Namibian context.

Therefore the researcher had to visit the schools in order to obtain a sample of student teachers. Ten schools were chosen close to the college. Each of these schools typically held 18 to 24 student teachers. The researcher first met with the principal of each school to explain the nature of the study and then held a group meeting with student teachers from each school during a school break. At this meeting they were informed about the nature of the study and of its voluntary and confidential aspects. The researcher requested four student teachers for participation in the study. The student teachers were told they had three days in which they could volunteer for the study. Since all student teachers lived in the college dormitories and were driven to and from the schools by college transportation, they were informed that they could contact the researcher at the end of the day at the college if they wished to volunteer. Ten student teachers from four schools volunteered, six female and four male students. It is interesting to note that four of the ten student teachers worked in pairs. Each pair was assigned to a single classroom.

The student teachers in the study possessed a variety of schooling and teaching experiences. Their ages ranged from 20-30 years. Three of them were married with children, four were single parents with children and the remaining were single without children. All ten participants had passed Grade 12 (Standard 10) when they were admitted to the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) in January 1994.

Two of the participants had been teaching before they enrolled in the college. One had taught for three years and the other for two years in rural primary schools. These two student teachers only had temporary credentials because they were considered underqualified. The other eight student teachers had no teaching experience. After completing their Grade 12, they joined the BETD Program. The student teachers were assigned to different grades, i.e., two students were assigned to grade one, one to grade four, two students to grade five, two to grade six, two to grade eight, and one grade nine.

Although the original intent of the researcher was to include only four lecturers and four student teachers in the study, the number of participants increased due to the voluntary nature of the study and willingness of the participants. The researcher ended up with a greater number of lecturers and student teachers than expected and did not wish to offend other lecturers or student teachers by excluding them from participating in the study. The researcher also decided to include additional subjects on the grounds that increasing the numbers would also increase the information hopefully increasing the reliability.

Teachers

The seven teachers who participated in this study were the first seven teachers that the researcher informally approached. They were individually

informed that the researcher was working with student teachers in order to gain information about the learner-centered approach and asked if they would be willing to share their perceptions of such an approach and their student teachers use of the learner-centered approach in their classrooms. The researcher emphasized that he would not be specifically observing the teachers, and they were all willing to be part of his research. Of the seven teachers who volunteered, five were female and two were male. Two of the teachers, a female and a male were also school principals.

Education Officers

The researcher individually approached five education officers working for the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture at NIED in order to have them participate in the interviews. They were all willing and interested to be involved in the study. Five education officers participated, two females and three males. The researcher knew four of them personally and the other education officer was suggested by one of the four. For a composition of the total sample of the participants included in the study, see Table 1.

Table 1

Composition of Participants

	No. Females	No. Males	Total
Lecturers	4	2	6
BETD III Student Teachers	6	4	10
Teachers	5	2	7
Education Officers	2	3	5
TOTAL	17	11	28

Data Collection

The following section describes the main sources of data collection used during the study, namely: interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis.

The Interviews

Several researchers (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984; Best and Kahn, 1986; Stake, 1988; Seidman, 1991; Mclaren, 1995 and Sultana, 1995) indicate that people are more willing to be open when they talk than when they write. Also interviews can be effective in revealing certain aspects that cannot be verified or detected through observations (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984, Best and Kahn, 1986, Anderson and Burns, 1989 and Witkin and Altschuld, 1994). As Hamel et al., (1993:17) states clearly that:

> To understand an individual's behaviour, we must know how he perceives the situation, the obstacles he believed he had to face, the alternatives he has opening up to him. We cannot understand the effects of the range of possibilities, delinquent subcultures, social norms and other explanations of behavior

> which are commonly invoked, unless we consider them from the actor's point of view.

Since the researcher felt that this primary source of first-hand information would be obtained through interviews, these interviews took the form of a conversation in order to allow more dialogue. The researcher hoped to gain access to confidential information that would not have been obtained if the individual interviewees had been given a questionnaire or had been conventionally interviewed. The lecturers, student teachers, teachers and the Ministry personnel were all interviewed.

The interviews were informal and used open-ended questions in order to give the interviewee greater time and flexibility to answer the questions. Furthermore, the interviews were also semi-structured in order to allow the researcher to ask probing questions where necessary, and give the interviewee more time to think. It is important to explain and clarify any questions that are not clearly understood by the interviewees (Brown and Weisberg, 1980; Wolcott, 1988; Sprinthall and Schmutt, 1991 and Witkin and Altschuld, 1995). The researcher's main target group, the lecturers and student teachers were each given two interviews. The first interview was to explore their notion of learner-centered education while the second was to provide clarifications and elaboration on issues raised in the first interview and to elaborate more on certain activities they carried out during the researcher's first classroom observations. The second interview also

provided an opportunity to see if the lecturers and student teachers' perceptions matched their practice.

The reliability of the interview method is greater when the interview is based upon a careful design, thus ensuring that significant information is elicited. Reliability is also affected by the accuracy of the information which the interviewees give and by the clarity of the questions asked during the interviews. In this study the researcher hoped to increase the validity of the information by restating questions in a slightly different form at a later time in the interview for both lecturers and student teachers.

All the interviews were audio taped with the prior consent of the participants. The researcher also jotted down field notes during the interviews in order to help clarify point of views and record possible questions for future use. Specific information about the interviews with each target group follows.

Interviews with Lecturers

The six lecturers were each interviewed once and four of them were interviewed a second time. All interviews were approximately an hour each time. They were first interviewed individually before any classroom observation took place. The first interview took place one to three days before their first observation in order to gather their perceptions about the learner-centered approach and to determine what specific learner-centered strategies they said they were using in their teaching. Lecturers were again

individually interviewed following the first classroom observation to follow up with the first interview and to clarify the strategies they used when teaching. All interviews took place during the daytime at the college whenever lecturers did not have a class. The researcher interviewed the lecturers in their empty classrooms because it provided a quiet location. No interview lasted more than one hour, and all interviews were audiotaped. The researcher also jotted down field notes during this time. The researcher tried to arrange a group interview with the lecturers but this was not possible because of the time conflict with their time tables.

Interviews with Student Teachers

The researcher individually interviewed and observed eight of the ten student teachers twice. The two remaining student teachers (one female and one male) were individually interviewed and observed only once. The researcher also managed to interview all ten student teachers once in one large group. The individual interviews took place in their respective schools in an empty classroom sometime during the day. The group interview took place at the college after school hours. All interviews were audiotaped and the researcher also jotted down field notes during the interviews. The duration for all the interviews were approximately one hour.

Interviews with Teachers

All seven teachers interviewed were cooperating teachers for the student teachers in their teaching practice, and were interviewed once individually. Four teachers were interviewed in their empty classrooms during a break sometime in the day, while the two teacher/principals were interviewed in their offices. Again all interviews were audiotaped and the researcher jotted down field notes. Although the researcher did not observe the teachers teaching in their classrooms, he still felt it would be worthwhile to talk to these teachers and hear their views on how the student teachers implemented learner-centered education in their teaching.

Interviews with Education Officers

The education officers were individually interviewed once. The intent was to hear from them regarding how the reforms toward the learner-centered approach were progressing at the colleges of education in Namibia. The researcher also wished to find out if any official policy documents were available regarding learner-centered education and their views on the origin of the approach. It was also the intention of the researcher to hear from the education officers how they personally viewed learner-centered education in Namibia.

The interviews were conducted in their offices and the duration of all the interviews were approximately one hour. Again all interviews were audiotaped and accompanied with field notes.

Observations of the Participants

Direct observation of the participants is one of the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research (Anderson, 1990 and Creswell, 1994). The researcher thought that, the observation should not be "covert," but instead should be open, with the observer participating or sitting in and watching the real situation.

According to Erickson and Nosanchuk, (1979), Goetz and LeCompte (1984) and Best and Kahn (1993), observations should be open-minded in order to avoid biased results. Sprinthall and Schmutte (1991:98) state that, "If, for example, the observer becomes involved with the children on the playground, the setting would no longer be 'natural' because of the changes that might be produced by the intervention of the observer." In addition, Sprithall and Schmutte (1991:98) further suggest that:

> In fact the ideal situation would be one in which the observers could be concealed (without, of course, reducing the accuracy of their observations). Sometimes, for example, observers might be concealed behind a two-way mirror, thus reducing or eliminating the effect of the mere presence of the observers.

Although this was clearly not practical, during the observations the researcher was careful not to interfere with the natural processes that

occurred in the classroom environment. The researcher did not participate in the teaching of any subject. Instead, the researcher's participation took the form of helping the teachers to do minor things in the classrooms, for example cleaning the chalkboard if there was a need, giving assignments back to the learners, and arranging the desks according to the teacher's wishes. The researcher could have sat at the back of a classroom and watched what was going on; in that case, however, it appeared likely that both teachers and students might suspect that maybe the researcher was there for the purpose of evaluating and judging. Finally, if the researcher had been participating in teaching, this could have interfered with the natural setting of classroom instructions. The researcher was also careful not to interfere with the culture of the whole classroom while he examined the behavior of both lecturers and students in the context of normal, daily circumstances. For that reason the researcher observed participants more than once and would have liked to observe each participant more than twice but time restraints prohibited more observations. Spindler and Spindler (1987) and Best and Kahn (1993) point out that prolonged and repeated observations are essential in order to produce suitable and reliable results. Prolonged, repeated observations can help the researcher to triangulate the information, so that similarities and common features can be found.

The purpose of the first observation was to see if both lecturers and student teachers used the learner-centered techniques they said from the

interviews. It also helped the researcher to see the range of teaching techniques which lecturers and student teachers actually used in their teaching. The second observation gave the researcher another chance to see what teaching techniques were used and hopefully increased the reliability of the data.

Not all participants had two lessons observed. Two of the ten student teachers were observed only once due to time constraints and two of the six lecturers unfortunately were not observed at all. These two lecturers were busy supervising student teachers and also attending workshops away from the college. The observations of the lecturers' lessons were approximately an hour while the observations of the student teachers' lessons were approximately thirty five minutes.

The researcher kept field notes during all the observations and also videotaped one lecturer who asked to be videotaped for the purpose of improving his/her teaching.

Field Notes

Field notes were taken during the interviews, classroom observations and informal conversations throughout the four month study. The researcher noticed that there were various categories or types of field notes which can be used during research. For example, field log, field jotting and field diary are all considered to be field notes. Though these types of field

notes seem to blend and merge, the researcher chose to keep field notes in the form of a diary. He felt it was an effective way of writing down his feelings, opinions, and perceptions during the research. In addition, the researcher used the field diary to organize his interviews and observation schedules. That is where he wrote appointments to meet his participants. The field diary was also used to write down the questions which emerged from the interviews and observations for a further interview. The field notes were extremely helpful to the researcher in the organization of his field work, and the diary was also helpful to the researcher because it helped him to recall the accounts from both interviews and observations.

Audiotape Recording

The researcher used the audiotape recorder throughout all interviews in order to supplement the interviews. The researcher chose to use a tape recorder because it could reveal data that was possibly missed during the interviews by taking field notes. Hopkins (1993:119) states that:

> Audiotape recording is one of the most popular teacher research methods. Transcripts are excellent for those situations where teachers require a very specific and accurate record of a limited aspect of their teaching, or of a particular interaction, or of a particular interaction, say between a specific teacher and child or between two children.

In order to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations, audiotape recording can be of great help. Also, since audiotape can be played back, it

can provide a useful starting point for further investigations (Goetz and LeCompte, 1994; Hopkins, 1993 and Lews and Howe, 1993).

The validity and the reliability of audiotaping is largely determined by the manner in which the data is interpreted and transcribed. Twenty minutes into one interview the interviewee could not remember exactly what s/he had said earlier and said, "What did I say, did I ever say what I am saying now? Could you please play back the tape?" In fact, s/he had been speaking on a sensitive issue, and s/he realized that s/he had not said what s/he had wanted to say as carefully as s/he would have liked. As the researcher had promised the participants that the tapes would only be re-played at the request of the one being interviewed, the tape was played back and the interviewee realized that s/he made a statement that he or she felt was controversial and subject to misinterpretation. After listening to the tape, s/he elaborated more on what s/he meant.

The researcher noticed that some participants were not comfortable with being taped while being interviewed. Some told the researcher that they were uncomfortable with being recorded because they thought that maybe the conversations might be listened to by other people and that this might cause them problems with their supervisors. Other student teachers thought that perhaps their lecturers might review or play back the cassettes and that this might affect their evaluation performance at the end of the year. The researcher assured all the participants who were involved in the

study that the tapes would not be reviewed or played back by anyone other than the researcher and the individual participants being interviewed.

Document Analysis

The researcher consulted with the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology, and various other bodies in order to be given permission to go through some confidential documents that were relevant to the study. Document analysis is important because it gives the researcher a general background on the subject that is being studied (Murphy, 1980; Lincoln and Guba 1985 and Berg, 1989). Hayman (1968:27) indicates that:

> For progress to occur, it is essential that new work be based on or built on what has already been accomplished. In a mature discipline a research cannot start at the beginning, from scratch. It is always essential to refer to what has been written in order to see the methodology which was used as well as the problems encountered. It help to avoid repetition of the same work.

The researcher reviewed some documents from the Ministry of Education and Culture and other government documents. All the documents were written on the education reforms in Namibia and some were documents on learner-centered education in Namibia. These documents were reviewed in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the information which had previously been obtained on the subject on which the study was conducted. Document analysis is significant in a general sense, because it enhances the

credibility of the research in progress (Hayman, 1968; Murphy, 1980; Anderson and Burns, 1989; Anderson, 1990 and Hopkins, 1993).

Data Analysis

This study involved the collection of data from interviews and observations of the two main groups of participants, namely the six lecturers and ten student teachers from Ongwediva College of Education. In addition, the researcher also interviewed seven classroom teachers who worked with the student teachers, and five officials from the Ministry of Education and also viewed relevant documents

Data analysis was ongoing from the start of the study. A field diary was kept to record impressions, thoughts, and questions during the four month study. After each interview with a participant, the researcher reread his field diary to help clarify his thoughts and prepare himself for the next interview. The researcher again reviewed all field notes in his diary for each participant after each group of interviews was completed to see if any patterns or themes from the data began to emerge. For example, when the first set of interviews of all six lecturers was completed, the researcher reread all field notes which helped him to determine questions for the second round of interviews. The same procedure was followed for observations of the lecturers and student teachers. In addition the researcher recorded

information from other sources, mainly staff, at the college during the four months.

At the completion of the study, when the researcher began transcribing the audiotapes for each group of participants, the data was compiled and themes or patterns were sought. After the data from all the groups of participants was transcribed and compiled, the researcher again looked for additional themes to emerge across the groups.

Reflections Regarding the Methodology

When the study was conducted the final year college students (BETD III), who were the initial target group, were out for the entire term on their School Based Studies (SBS). Since the researcher could not observe the lecturers teaching the BETD III students, he observed the lecturers teaching BETD I and II students at the college. Although it was easy to observe the lecturers in their classrooms, it was often a problem to arrange a time and place to interview them. The researcher generally arranged to meet them at the college after school hours in the late afternoon or in the evenings. Some lecturers missed appointments because of domestic commitments while others needed to prepare their lessons in the evenings.

The researcher intended to have a group interview with all the lecturers who were participating in the study; unfortunately, there were various conflicts with their time-tables. They had different time schedules

for their classes; some had classes in the morning while others had classes in the afternoons. In addition, they were participating in evaluating student teachers during their School Based Studies (teaching practice) and were exceptionally busy. As a result of these time conflicts, the researcher was not able to interview the lecturers as a group.

Although the researcher interviewed all the student teachers individually, he noticed that some student teachers were uncomfortable about being interviewed in a group setting. They were concerned that some students might inform the lecturers about what they had said concerning the pedagogical applications of learner-centered education at the teacher education college. When meeting with the student teachers as a group, they were reserved and the researcher could not get as much data as he desired. Even where interviewed individually, some student teachers expressed a concern regarding confidentiality. One student teacher, when interviewed alone, said: "How do you know that there is no student who will tell the lecturers what we are going to say about how they use the learner centered education in their teaching? Because I know that some of them do not use it. You never know if one or some students will report you and that lecturers will penalize you at the end of the year, by either failing or give you incomplete, which will require you to re-do the work."

Unexpected problems were posed by the actual process of traveling from school to school. The Rector of the college had arranged for the

researcher to go out to the schools with the transport unit that was transporting lecturers to the schools. Unfortunately, as the lecturers were assessing and evaluating, the student teachers generally thought that the researcher was another evaluator, which brought uneasiness to their expressions. This misconception initially made them reserved and wary of confiding information to the researcher, for fear that it would be shared with their lecturers. After the second trip to the schools, the researcher decided to go to the schools alone, using private transport. At about this time the researcher noticed a great change in their behavior. The student teachers became more open because the researcher was no longer accompanied by their lecturers, who were evaluating them during their school based studies. The other reason why the researcher decided to travel alone was to protect the anonymity of the student teachers. The researcher did not want any of the student teachers to become known to the lecturers as a result of participation.

The researcher also encountered difficulty in transcribing the interviews. He intended to transcribe the interviews on a daily basis or as soon as possible after each interview. However, he found time constraints and a lack of facilities for transcribing did not allow him to transcribe the data until after he completed the study four months later. In addition when he started to transcribe the interviews he noticed that in some of the interviews of the student teachers and classroom teachers, the background

noise of children made it difficult to understand. In these instances the researcher had to rely mainly on his field notes.

The final problem encountered dealt with the videotaping. The lecturer who requested to be videotaped was not able to formally view and discuss the videotape of the lesson with the researcher. This lecturer asked to take the videotape home where s/he had borrowed equipment to view it. The lecturer lived a great distance from the campus and the researcher was unable to go to his/her home to view it together. The researcher had to return to Canada two weeks later and was therefore unable to meet formally with this lecturer to discuss his/her teaching. However, he did meet informally a few days later to briefly discuss the lecturers' perception of the videotaped lesson.

Procedural and Ethical Guidelines

The researcher was aware of the ethical and moral issues to be taken into account when involving a human being as a subject in a study. Before the commencement of the study, the ethics committee of the Department of Elementary Education of the University of Alberta granted approval to the study.

Thereafter, the researcher wrote a letter to the high authorities of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in order to be allowed to carry out research as specified in the letter. Permission was granted by the National

Institute for Educational Development (NIED). In addition, a letter requesting permission was mailed to the Rector and the Management committee of Ongwediva College of Education and they too approved the study. Merriam (1988) and Charles (1995) indicates that research should aim for beneficence, honesty, and accurate disclosure. In this study, those who were interviewed were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and code names i.e. Lecturer A Student teacher E were used in writing up the results. Anderson (1990) and Sowell and Casey (1982) mention that establishing trust and confidentiality are essential when collecting raw data. When code names were not used, the researcher used general terms like "the student teachers, lecturers, teachers and education officers" were used. The researcher attempted to report the data exactly as it was collected, without changing or suppressing any part of it. In cases where audiotape recording was used, the participants were assured that the tapes would only be reviewed and transcribed by the researcher. The participants were also assured that they were volunteers in the study and could withdraw at any time, without being penalized. Finally a consent form was given to them to sign in order to formally convey that they were indeed volunteers in the study (See Appendix C for a sample of the consent form which the lecturers and student teachers signed).

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This Chapter presents the findings from the data analysis and focuses primarily on data gathered from observations and interviews with college lecturers and student teachers. It also includes findings from interviews with class teachers and Ministry personnel.

Document Analysis

The researcher examined the official documents of the Ministry of Education in Namibia that pertained to educational reform and the implementation of Basic Education in the Namibian schools. These documents were general documents regarding educational reform and specific subject area curriculum guides. The researcher examined the curriculum documents for primary, junior secondary schools and colleges of education.

Some of the documents described Namibian education in general and how society can be integrated into the Namibian education system. These viewed Namibian learner-centered education as a transformative education which should address the needs of Namibian society. They also discussed

the awareness of equality and gender equity in the Namibian education system and it's society at large.

The Namibian policy documents were obtained in different places, i.e., Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology, Ministry of Youth and Sports and others were obtained from Ongwediva College of Education.

Although the study revealed that there was no specific policy document regarding learner-centered education in Namibia, each curriculum document contained the philosophy of learner-centered education and gave specific learner-centered examples in parts of these documents. Most of these documents also emphasized the need to involve the learners in their learning activities. Curriculum documents such as *Pilot Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education, The Broad Curriculum for Basic Education Teacher Diploma, Subject Area Curriculum for Educational Theory and Practice for Basic Education Teacher Diploma, National Evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma, Towards Education for All, Teacher Education Reform for Namibia and Broad Policy Directives for Education Reform and Renewal in Namibia: 1991,* all contained philosophy and examples of a learner-centered approach. These gave the researcher a better picture of the learner-centered approach and some specific strategies to look for when observing the lecturers and student

teachers in their classrooms. Many descriptions of learner-centered education from these documents are included in earlier chapters of this study.

Interviews with the Ministry Officers

Five education officers were individually interviewed to find out the origin of the learner-centered approach and if they knew of any policy documents regarding this approach. The researcher was also interested in their perceptions of learner-centered education.

They all agreed that there was no official policy document regarding the learner-centered approach. Some of them indicated that it is not easy to draft a policy on the learner-centered approach because people have different philosophies. One interviewee said that "the situation in Namibia is complex because within the policy makers are those other people who look at the current education reforms in a different way, or in other terms, they are anti-reforms."

When asked where learner-centered education originated, two indicated that they thought it was designed and implemented by foreigners and that the Namibians were not involved, while the remaining three stated that the learner-centered approach originated in Namibia. The two interviewees who said that the learner-centered approach was foreign, expressed the opinion that the new education system in Namibia was

inadequate and below standard. They also indicated that the content taught in the teacher education colleges today is inadequate compared to the previous education system. One stated:

> You see my observation is that this magic work of learner-centered education, it is not something suddenly discovered after independence or whatever, it simply means good education. Twenty, thirty years ago, I have seen teachers do their very best learner education when I was a child even. Those very good teachers knew that they had to involve and keep the interest and commitment of the learner all the time. They never heard the word "learner-centered education". They were in education which was a good education. It is not some new system that you write down in a book. It is simply good teaching, involvement of learners, activity of learners, not lazy, unoccupied moments. That is what learner involvement means. The learner is actively learning and involved in the lesson all the time.

The other interviewee said, "But learner-centered education is not a strange course in Namibia. We have been training the learner-centered at the teacher college. We have been training teachers to implement a learner-centered approach since 1979." S/he further indicated that, when s/he compared the former learner-centered education to the new Namibian learner-centered education, s/he could not see major differences. The only difference noticed was that the new Namibian learner-centered education is more "democratic" in a sense that it allows the learners to state their own learning objectives and decide the materials they want to use during the lesson. S/he further indicated:

> We did not pay so much attention to the democratic approach to learner-centered education. What we did in our training

> was to work very much on training teachers to be able to offer the content of the subject and teach skills using different teaching methods. The teaching methods created different learning activities with the learners which were applicable to a specific skills or specific content. That is the way we approached the learner-centered education. This democratic learner-centered which seems to show the process is a little bit new to me.

These interviewees both indicated that they feel teachers now in the schools are not committed to their work. They said that in most cases, they leave the learners alone in the classroom which could be a reason why there are high failure rates in schools. One pointed out that s/he believes in the education reforms which should concentrate on school and job ethics. S/he further related a recent experience when visiting schools in the northern part of Namibia:

> I visited last year (1995) one region I won't say where. I left my base before 7:00 AM in the morning, picked up the local inspector, and went on a trip for the morning. Schools started at 7:15 or 7:30 until about 2:00. We went to the furthest school that we could reach in the morning. On that same trip I physically visited nine schools and I passed by a few others that I couldn't enter into. Of those nine schools, I tend to visit regardless of the time of day in the morning, it's school time, I saw only one school where it wasn't break time. In all other eight, the kids were outside. They were not in the classrooms. Out of the nine schools, I found only two principals present on the premises at the school. I asked other teachers where were the principals?, and the answers they gave me were similar, that they were in town and others had no idea where they went. There was no teaching in these schools. Some teachers were in the neighboring bottle stores while learners were left alone. Another secondary school that I visited, kids were breaking down the classes, sitting on the desks, desks all over the place, paint brushes all over the place, dirt all over the place. Some were wandering to stores and then come back,

> others sitting out under the trees. I asked the learners, "Where were the teachers?" They were sitting in their staff room. I said, "What are they doing?" They're marking tests or something. Kids are breaking down the place, teachers sit in the staff room marking instead of taking in those tests after school hours, putting it out in a neat bundle or handing it down to the teacher who's supposed to mark it and continue with teaching for the rest of the day. You can go mark your tests after school. That's why you're being paid as a teacher. But there's no teaching for the rest of the day. It's gone. And then at the end of the year, the results of such schools are very poor and people compare them to the results of working schools where every half an hour is used for productive work. And the results of such a school are way higher I think 90% pass rates. You get a pass rate there of 30%. People say no, but the other school is advantaged. Yeah, it might be advantaged in some cases, in some instances, definitely so. But it works. Everybody works. Principal, teachers, learners. It doesn't work in some schools and that's the reform I want to get back in schools.

The interviewee implied that since independence, many schools tend to have unlimited and undefined liberty. S/he argued that, this was created by the new education system which has many rules which are not adhered to. These two both mentioned that teachers, learners and some communities tend to misunderstand "education for all." They think it gives them the power to implement and do whatever they wish. They stated that the new teacher education program should work hard in order to bring everyone in place. One elaborated:

> We should give the learners the skills to continuously learn themselves and upgrade their knowledge, but we should give them solid values and from my perspective, that is based on the Christian ethics and Christian values. Solid values and good work ethic strive to be excellent in whatever you do. If I ever wish for reforming the education system, this is what I

> would like back in the schools. Give me any curriculum, any content, if I have my children walking out of that with good values, solid work ethic, they are never late for work....but if they are always late for school, how will they one day be on time for work suddenly? If they know if I don't hand in this assignment at the end of the week, nothing happens, so what? In any case I get my credits and I pass or whatever. Now he steps into a job situation and is supposed to complete this job by Friday in an acceptable manner of certain quality. How is he or she certainly going to do that because in school that was never expected .

The two interviewees also mentioned that because Namibian people were not involved in the formation of learner-centered education, that is why they feel teachers in the schools do not carry their responsibilities. Instead they felt that everything is left in the hands of the learners to teach themselves. One stated:

> It is difficult to mention the foreign countries which are involved in the implementation of the learner-centered education in Namibia. I think I know whose learner-centered is being implemented in this country but I cannot mention because even the Namibians know the country which is implementing this learner-centered education which seem to be a solidarity education because there are no student teachers who fail the examinations.

The second interviewee pointed out that:

> I cannot point you to A, B, or C that has the learner-centered vision. I think it is mostly derived from a college, European, Scandinavian, British, American perspectives and strongly influenced by the foreign agents and dominated by the Scandinavian countries. If there was any Namibian who could say this learner-centered education in Namibia was designed by the Namibians that would not be true. To use the word design was probably to sit down and look at a new program. In this way both of the parties or people involved could divide the responsibilities among themselves, "you do A, you do B, you

> do C or you do D". This type of the Namibian education reform, was thought to change attitude and approach which then can be practiced by teachers in the classrooms.

These two officials agreed that part of the problem in the schools stemmed from the lack of an official policy document for teachers or college lecturers regarding implementation of the learner-centered approach in Namibia.

One of the two stated that, "If someone presently does not have a policy document which states clearly the aspects of learner-centered, why should you expect teachers to use the learner-centered which they think is just limited to group work." The interviewee mentioned that it was not worth the effort to implement learner-centered education in situations whereby the teachers do not know their responsibilities. S/he mentioned that it has been his/her experience with teachers in the schools that they tend to limit the learner-centered approach to group work only.

Another problem these two officials cited was democracy in education. One indicated that:

> There is a problem with the whole implementation of the reforms like the one in Namibia. It is problematic because it means a total change of approach and that is always difficult when you want to change something and from one side to another. Part of the problem is also that, the whole educational philosophy is based on democratic visions. That means that, participation is a very important issue and as you have these kind of notions behind the policy, it also means that you ... cannot direct from the center of the system, from the ministry or from me or wherever. You cannot direct things in detail because then you are actually from my point of view, not following the policy because you want people to get involved and that's why also I see the steering documents as frame

> documents within which learner-centered education has to be developed... But ... the steering documents, they... clearly stated the direction, but the road is not clearly marked how to....and that is a dilemma when you want to create a democratic participative situation.

It is important to note that these two Ministry officials who stated the learner-centered approach is not new to Namibia but has been in use since 1979 and even earlier were likely correct from their perspectives, because they were educated in schools for Whites and not schools for Blacks during colonial times. According to these officials, the education system was learner-centered but not as democratic as the current education system.

Unlike these two Ministry officials who believed the learner-centered approach was designed and implemented by foreigners, three others indicated the Namibian philosophy of learner-centered education originated in Namibia. One said that those who were involved in the Namibian education reforms were not only Namibians within the country, but also were Namibians in exile. S/he further pointed out that although the learner-centered approach originated in Namibia, a number of consultants from outside the country worked with the Namibians and lecturers in the colleges. Two of these three officials said they worked together with the Swedish team before independence in preparation for teacher education for an independent Namibia. They also stated that lecturers from all four teacher colleges also participated in the preparation of the new curricula. All three felt that the people who were and who are still against the Namibian

education reforms are mainly people from the minority White group. They felt that some Whites still resist not because the reforms are ineffective but they feel their philosophy of apartheid and Bantu Education among the Black community has collapsed, and they feel defeated. Another indicated that, some of the Whites whom s/he knows have a positive attitude towards the learner-centered education because of its creativity and critical thinking when used in the teaching and learning. One of the three stated that:

> I think the vision of the learner-centered is with different people. ...I think the vision at least was with the old minister of Education and Culture, Nahas Angula, who was then the Minister of Education and Culture. I think he had a vision about and still has...a vision about learner-centered education and I think there is also a vision among teacher educators and teachers because I see that the vision of learner-centered education is part of a new kind of political vision sort of creating a more democratic society. So I think in broader terms it is part of the political agenda of creating a more democratic society.

This interviewee remarked that because of Namibia's democratic constitution and the rescontruction of its' society, it has attracted many International agents to assist in its education system. The International agents assist in funding projects in the Namibian education system because they believe in social restructuring of the Namibian society. The interviewee continued: "That is why we are here to assist and because we also believe in social democratic reconstruction and we are part of that and

that is why we are trying to recruit people in the project who have experiences which would be helpful and fruitful in assisting Namibia."

Although they disagreed upon the origin of learner-centered education all five of the interviewees were positive regarding the learner-centered approach even though their enthusiasm varied in degrees. Three of them mentioned that they felt the majority of Namibians like the learner-centered approach compared to the colonial Bantu education system. They believe reform should be a continuous process in order to correct the identified problems in the early stages. It is interesting to note that the three officials who stated the learner-centered approach originated in Namibia felt there was little problem regarding its implementation, but the two who felt it was originated by foreigners felt there is a problem with implementation.

All five Ministry officials stated it is necessary to have a policy document on learner-centered education in order to give a clear guide to lecturers, teachers, student teachers and to society. They felt a specific policy on learner-centered education would help to ensure understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the policy makers and the implementers. They also said that it helps both the policy makers and teachers to be coherent and consistent and would help guide important decisions. One of the five Ministry officials also pointed out that a policy document would give fundamental insight on both long and short term theory development for

the program and that it would draw attention to the extent that particular actions might result.

The Lecturers

First Interview

The first interview with all six lecturers began by asking about their prior experiences and feeling toward their schooling. They were also asked what learner-centered meant to them and their impression of its inception in Namibia as well as their feeling towards this approach. The researcher was also interested in exploring what learner-centered strategies they used in their teaching and if the community was involved with the college.

Experiences of Lecturers with Schooling

Four of the six lecturers were very negative toward the education they received during the legacy of the colonial regime. They were educated in Bantu education, a term which referred to the apartheid education system. The other two lecturers received their education in the Western World and were positive about their schooling experiences because they felt they were educated in learner-centered education.

One of the two lecturers educated in the western world mentioned that s/he was shocked to learn that teachers are still using corporal punishment in the schools in Namibia. S/he indicated that:

> I liked my school experience because it was learner-centered. The teachers used group work and discovery methods of learning. When I moved to high school, still teachers used more learner-centered approach. I still remember, in science, we as learners used to carry out experiments individually and in groups and we were recording the results and came to conclusions. This was nice because all learners were involved in the experiments, problem solving and other activities. I also noticed that it was another way of helping those learners who were shy to speak in front of the class, to be confident of themselves.

These two lecturers felt a learner-centered approach was appropriate to use because it allows both teachers and learners to reflect on what is taught and learned. They stated that although some of their teachers were teacher directed in high school, at times they used learner-centered activities.

In contrast, the four lecturers who experienced Bantu education felt that the education system they went through was rudimentary in the sense that it fostered memorizing facts and text. One indicated that learners were forced to learn their subjects by heart, as hands on experiences were limited, and that teachers were not concerned about learner's progress, but rather concerned with completing the syllabus on time or even revising it to prepare the learners for examinations. S/he indicated that:

> When I was in the last year of standard 10 or metric (Grade 12), I still remember it was in September when we were revising the subjects in grade 12 because the final examinations were starting in October. When the teacher comes in a class, he or she would tell us to stand in rows and ask questions. If you fail to get the question correct, you would either be beaten with a stick or deprived of lunch or a break. These measures were inhumane in the education system.

All four lecturers pointed out that the former colonial education system was teacher directed and textbook oriented. The teacher alone spoke while learners were expected to be quiet and amiable all of the time. One indicated that:

> In both my primary and secondary school days we as learners had no textbooks. The teacher alone was the only one who had a textbook for the subject. From this textbook we wrote down summaries given to us on the chalkboard.

The lecturers said they had no freedom of expression and it was the teachers alone who had the power. Furthermore one lecturer indicated that:

> Teacher centered education taught us to be dependent on teachers because learners were not taught to be active thinkers. We waited for the teacher to do everything for us. I remember one teacher who taught us in grade 10 (standard 8) who used to tell the whole class that we should not worry about asking questions, but to read the summaries he gave us. When we wrote the final examination it was quite different from what he taught us. Unfortunately no candidate passed at our school. When I compare the former teacher centered education to the learner-centered education, I really see a great difference and I am personally in favor of learner-centered education.

All four lecturers also mentioned they disliked being abused by their teachers, who exposed them to corporal punishment all through primary and secondary school. Given the descriptions of their past experiences it is not surprising that these lecturers expressed a preference toward learner-centered education.

Lecturers' Understanding of the Origin and Meaning of Learner-Centered Education

When the lecturers were asked where this vision of learner-centered education in Namibia originated, all six lecturers stated that the learner-centered approach was foreign. Three of them thought it originated from Sweden and they justified their responses by arguing that they knew there were teams of Swedish people at each college who helped to implement the BETD program. One of these lecturers referred to the Reform Facilitators at Ongwediva College of Education that are Swedish and implied that they were monitoring the implementation of the learner-centered approach at the college. Of the other three lecturers who indicated it was foreign, two stated that it was very difficult to tell who was influencing learner-centered education in Namibia because there are so many foreign agents currently involved in education reforms. The remaining lecturer pointed out that perhaps learner-centered education was brought to Namibia by Denmark or Sweden. S/he mentioned that:

> I do not know where this approach (learner-centered education) came from. Maybe from Britain or wherever. We do not know for sure, we just have it. We are just talking about what learner centered is. We do not understand it. Nobody really knows exactly what learner-centered education is in our country. That is why we have to educate ourselves so that we should know it and share it with everybody.

Though the lecturers were uncertain regarding the origin of the learner-centered approach and who had the greatest influence over its

inception, all were fairly positive and optimistic towards the learner-centered approach. They believed that the learner-centered approach was an holistic approach to teaching and learning because learners are guided toward life long skills. They also supported the learner-centered approach because they felt it created an awareness of issues and ideas that go beyond what is taught in the classroom and encouraged them to conduct research on these topics.

Although all six lecturers stated they supported a learner-centered approach, their perceptions of what constitutes this approach were varied. Despite their variations, common threads did exist. All six agreed that the learners should be actively engaged in the learning process. Their perceptions about learner-centered education seemed to overlap in the sense that, they used common words and phrases in their definitions of learner-centered education. For example, learner-centered education was continually defined in the following terms: group work, pair work, learner participation in activities, having students report to the group or class, involving learners in projects, having the learner's knowledge and experiences accepted, learners' involvement in experiments, allowing the learners to explore on their own, and giving individual assignments and teachers as facilitators and guides for the learners. One lecturer defined learner-centered in the following terms:

> The teacher primarily acts as a facilitator and the students explore and discover on their own. The teacher prepares them and shows them what steps to take and ultimately has to design a good lesson. The teacher does not always have to have a specific goal, for the students tend to find their own. Generally this method allows the students more freedom, more creativity and more expression. The teacher will find time and time again that by allowing the students to come to the answers themselves, that can be very enlightening for everyone.

The implication was that the teacher should guide the learners as they explore for themselves. In other words the teacher should be able to coordinate the learning of the learners. S/he should make sure that the learners are given activities which engage them. If educational material is available, it is the teacher's responsibility to make it available to the learners in an interactive way. Further views on learner-centered education were expressed by another lecturer:

> The learner-centered education is when the learners do more activities. The teacher guides and motivates the learners to do activities which in themselves are educational. In addition, learners have the opportunity of working together in solving tasks given to them.

Several lecturers indicated that in a learner-centered approach students learn from other students in order to enhance their understanding. If learners were actively involved in the teaching and learning situation, they would be more motivated. Another lecturer indicated that the learner-centered approach was good because there is no negative consequence for incorrect answers. S/he was referring to how teachers used to punish

learners in the former education system when they received an incorrect answer. The Lecturer then defined learner-centered education as follows:

> Well, a learner-centered education is a process of using group work, or pair work to give the learner the opportunity to gain more information independently. It can employ experimentation or any other task which allows the learners to be critical in their thinking.

This same lecturer seemed to have a more limited definition of learner-centered education than the others. S/he only mentioned group work and pair work as learner-centered strategies, and believed in dividing learners into groups but thought the teacher should still control the entire class. When s/he was asked to explain what s/he meant by group work the answer was:

> To me learner-centered education means that, the teacher divides the learners into groups in order for the students to learn together for the rest of the term or year. I have noticed that in many classrooms of our college, some lecturers have arranged the desks in groups and these are permanent groups throughout the term or year.

His/her understanding of the learner-centered approach also seemed to be limited to what s/he saw other lecturers do in their classrooms. This same lecturer stated "At the college, I did not see other aspects of the learner-centered approach besides group work and students reporting to the class."

Two of the six lecturer's perceptions of learner-centered education seemed to go beyond the definitions of the other four lecturers. They both mentioned collaboration between lecturers as an important component of

the learner-centered approach. They talked about visiting other lecturer's classrooms to observe in order to improve their teaching, and they also mentioned the importance of student feedback for a successful learner-centered approach. In the new BETD program they expressed a concern that not only would they like feedback from student teachers, but they would also like feedback from their peers and the college management to see if they are successfully implementing this approach. According to them, this is not currently done. Another issue discussed was a gender issue that they felt affected participation. Both lecturers noticed that female student teachers seemed hesitant to ask and answer questions, and were suprised because they felt that some of the best student assignments were done by females. These lecturers wondered if perhaps this was a cultural issue or due to their previous schooling experiences. The last issue that was mentioned by both of them was the need for community involvement at the college and also for students to be more involved with the community. The fact that these two lecturers were more insightful regarding their views of learner-centered education is not surprising, because these were the two lecturers who experienced learner-centered education throughout their own education.

The four lecturers who had never experienced learner-centered education throughout their schooling said they gained their insights of the learner-centered approach through required and optional workshops or seminars since independence. These were mainly subject area specific such

as mathematics and education theory and practice workshops that emphasized content through using a learner-centered approach. Many of these workshops included lecturers and other officials from all four colleges and the University of Namibia. Since the implementation of the BETD program these national seminars have been on a yearly basis and are offered between term breaks. Most of the seminar leaders have been foreigners who have come to Namibia through funded projects for a short time period. For example, the researcher is aware that the University of Alberta has provided workshops in the area of Mathematics and Science education in Namibia over the past six years. All of the lecturers had also been involved with workshops run by the TERP (Teacher Education Reform Program) offered through Umea University in Sweden. These were taught by the TERP personnel who are based at each of the four Colleges of Education in Namibia. The lecturers noted that as the Namibians are collaborating with the TERP personnel they are beginning to take on more of a leadership role. The lecturers also stated they gained knowledge about learner-centered education by examining subject area curriculum documents, and the Broad Curriculum for the BETD. Three of the four mentioned that they were attending the optional "workshops for Higher Diploma Course" which are offered by TERP between term breaks. The intent of these workshops is staff development that is focused on learner-centered education and currently it is hoped that in the near future those who complete the Higher Diploma

Course will be able to apply for a part time Masters program. This Masters program is still in the planning stages and it is expected that students will remain in Namibia while working toward a masters degree as currently they have to leave the country in order to acquire a Masters degree.

The final question the researcher asked each lecturer was whether the community was involved at the college level, and all six lecturers agreed that there has been no community involvement at the college level.

First Classroom Observation

The researcher observed the lecturers in their classrooms to see what teaching strategies they used. In addition, the researcher wanted see if their beliefs and perceptions of learner-centered education appeared to match their teaching style.

As mentioned previously, only four of the six lecturers were observed teaching. The other two were not observed due to a time factor and the fact that they were also involved off campus in supervising and evaluating third year students in their school based studies (teaching practice). It is unfortunate that the two Lecturers who were not observed were the two who had experienced learner-centered education as part of their schooling. It would have been interesting to compare these two with the other Lecturers.

Of the four lecturers who were observed teaching, three of them attempted to actively involve the students in their lesson. The researcher felt that these three lecturer's perceptions of the learner-centered approach seemed to match their teaching strategies. The researcher used code names to guarantee the anonymity of the Lecturers and will therefore refer to them as Lecturer A, B, C and D. Lecturers A, B and C tried to involve the students in activities which engaged them. For example, all three Lecturers recognized the student's input and their prior knowledge experiences regarding the topics which they discussed. In addition, when the students were divided into groups, these lecturers moved around from one group to another to make sure that all the students were involved in the discussions. They also made sure that those students who were not active in group activities were encouraged to be involved. For example, Lecturer A noticed four students were not participating during the questioning time. When students were told to divide into groups, two of these students went to the same group while the other two went to different groups. The lecturer separated the two students who were together into separate groups, and then asked the four students to chair their groups. After the group discussions, the lecturer told the same students to report their group findings to the class.

Lecturer B and C attempted to increase student involvement by redirecting questions. When they were asked questions by students, they frequently asked the students if they knew the answers and then would

redirect the questions. They also asked students to elaborate on the points and facts they mentioned in the discussion groups. Another example of a learner-centered technique was when Lecturer B introduced the lesson topic and then asked the student teachers to brainstorm in pairs about the topic. After ten minutes the lecturer asked the student teachers to divide themselves into groups. The students were given questions to answer in groups while the lecturer moved from one group to another. The task appeared difficult, and the lecturer asked students to refer to their books if they needed them. The lecturer also told student teachers to answer the questions individually after they discussed the questions in groups. During this lesson the researcher observed an interesting dilemma. By the end of the class discussion, the lecturer realized that by allowing the student teachers to form their own groups, most were formed according to friendships or similar backgrounds. Interestingly, they were also formed on the basis of gender. For example one group was comprised of three women who were good friends. Consequently, the lecturer realized that because the groups were primarily gender and/or friendship based, that perhaps in the future, groups should be formed on the basis of random selection rather than offering choices to the student teachers. At the end of the class the lecturer stated his/her observations to the students and said that through random grouping there would be a wider range of backgrounds and the factor of gender inequality would also diminish.

Although Lecturers A, B and C appeared to be using techniques that they had identified as learner-centered, Lecturer D's perceptions of a learner-centered approach did not seem to match his or her teaching. The following is an example of observations during the lesson of Lecturer D:

The class was supposed to start at 7.30 AM but eventually it started at 7.50 AM. The student teachers had been waiting at the door as the classroom was locked. When the lecturer arrived, s/he unlocked the classroom and some of the student teachers went inside the classroom. Others had left because they thought the lecturer was not present. The student teachers took their seats and grouped themselves. The lecturer greeted them: "Good morning class." The student teachers responded without appearing to show much interest. "Good morning Sir/Madam." The lecturer gave an apology for being late and then introduced the lesson topic to the student teachers. The lecturer started by asking student teachers "What do you understand about ...?" (referring to the topic). The student teachers did not respond immediately. The lecturer asked another question "Do you understand me?" and repeated the first question "What do you understand about ....?". This time a few student teachers responded. Ignoring the students' different responses, the lecturer answered his/her own question. The lecturer then started talking and remained in front of the classroom for the remainder of the class only moving sideways to the left and to the right. The student teacher's groups were uneven, some groups had 1, 3, 4 or 7 students. Even

the formations in which they were sitting were different. Four student teachers were seated in a straight line and five other student teachers were seated in a group of two and three, parallel to each other, facing the lecturer. None of these seemed conducive to group discussions. The lecturer talked continually while some students paged through their textbooks and others talked to their friends. One student teacher sat alone and was cutting his/her nails.

As the lecturer continued speaking, the student teachers seemed bored and many were off task. Apparently the student teachers were waiting for the lecturer to give them tasks. About 15 minutes before the end of class, the lecturer asked the student teachers to divide themselves into groups and told those who were seated individually to join the others. Again the student teachers formed irregular groups comprised of three, four, seven and eight students. The student teachers were asked to discuss the lecture, and the lecturer then went outside and left the student teachers alone. Without specific tasks or questions assigned for the discussion, the student teachers started to move around the classroom. Some of them went outside and those who remained in the classroom were off task. A few student teachers walked to the front and wrote on the chalkboard. The lecturer did not come back to the classroom and after some time the remaining student teachers left as well. The student teachers were not given any assignment nor did they appear to have any fruitful discussions. Throughout the lesson

the student teachers remained uninvolved. Only the lecturer was engaged spending most of his/her time lecturing to the students.

This observation seemed incongruent with the first interview regarding this lecturer's perceptions towards the learner-centered approach. During the interview Lecturer D mentioned that, s/he always utilized group work with student teachers reporting to the class. The researcher assumed the group pattern observed was the group work s/he was referring to. In addition, it also seemed that when Lecturer D had indicated during the interview that students should not be interrupted when they were in groups, he or she meant the lecturer could do other things rather than being part of the student discussions. However, leaving the classroom excludes any interaction with students. Perhaps this scenario makes more sense when re-examining this lecturer's comments when asked where the learner-centered approach originated:

> I do not know where this approach (learner-centered education) came from. Maybe from Britain or wherever. We do no know for sure, we just have it. We are just talking about what learner centered is. We do not understand it. Nobody really knows exactly what learner centered education is in our country, that is why we have to educate ourselves so that we should know it and share it with everybody.

This observation has been noted before as in the Marope and Noonan (1995) report, where lecturers "abused" the learner-centered pedagogy by dividing the learners into groups and leaving them alone or as some learners

disclosed, lecturers would mark assignments. Marope and Noonan, (1995:2) indicated that:

> Some lecturers also noted the potential "abuse" of learner-centered approach to teacher education. They charged that some lectures have come to use this approach as a "time-out" technique where the Lectures can sit and relax while the students struggle with learning tasks which they hardly understand.

Further insight into Lecturer D's behavior may be illustrated by another excerpt taken from the interview. S/he mentioned that:

> Learner-centered education is not yet in action at this moment. The teachers are trying to implement it, but learners are the ones who have a problem, because they feel they are not learning anything. They expect the teachers to give them more information and summaries and short notes on the chalkboard. If you divide the learners in groups some of them will not be involved in group activities. They feel they are not learning anything. In this case the teacher has to force them to participate in group activities.

After reviewing the transcripts of the first interview with Lecturer D, the researcher realized that Lecturer D's comments perhaps illustrated a frustration or lack of knowledge about this approach.

Second Interview and Final Observation

During the second interview which took place one to three days after the first observation, three of the four lecturers seemed very interested in discussing the learner-centered approach. Possibly their interest increased because they were discussing their lessons. Lecturers A, B and C easily identified the learner-centered techniques they used in their lessons, which

were group work, pair work, students reporting to other students and giving group and individual assignments. Interestingly Lecturer A stated that s/he recognized that s/he did too much lecturing and wanted advice on how to improve his /her teaching. This lecturer asked the researcher how to solve this problem. The researcher then redirected the question back to the lecturer. Lecturer A stated:

> I think it is better to invite another lecturer into my classroom to observe how I teach, so that by the end of the lesson I could be given feedback. I think this might help me to improve my teaching strategies. I think the other way is to visit other lecturers' classrooms and see how they teach. I also think of video taping my lesson, so that I can review it with another lecturer and see what and how I should improve. In my case I would welcome anyone into my classroom. I have no problem with that. I do not know if other lecturers are comfortable with that idea. In fact we were suppose to be team teaching because it is an excellent way of teaching especially in a learner-centered education. When you have students in groups, you have some one or many bodies to help.

This caused the researcher to then volunteer to videotape this lecturer during the second observation of the class.

Lecturer D was not as enthusiastic as the others when discussing his or her lesson. This lecturer tended to talk about the lesson in general terms. When Lecturer D was asked to mention the aspects of the learner-centered approach s/he used in teaching the lesson, the response was general, i.e., "... Ministry of Education should make sure that the learner-centered-education is implemented in the schools and learners should explore in order to get the knowledge needed in specific topics about the subject." All responses

were answered generally, for example when Lecturer D was asked if s/he was optimistic about learner-centered education, the response was "learner-centered education was not yet in action" and further pointed out that student teachers were expecting too much from their lecturers, and some were demanding to be given summaries and short notes on the chalkboard. S/he indicated that there is a problem at the college and in the schools because student teachers and the learners in the schools do not know their rights and privileges. Lecturer D felt that learners seem to resist their teachers because they have too much freedom. Lecturer D further stated that there is a power struggle between lecturers, teachers and student teachers and learners in the school and some teachers seem to feel that perhaps in learner-centered education the learners take control of the class. S/he said "In this case the teacher has to force them to participate in group activities."

Several of the lecturers suggested the importance of notes taken during group discussion. They indicated the aim of collecting the notes which students wrote in their groups, was to compile pamphlets. The idea was that student teachers should produce materials which could be used in the future to help other student teachers. Dahlstrom, (1996) said when referring to the education of Namibians in exile, both learners and their teachers were producing booklets which contained illustrations and texts which the learners used in their learning. Dahlstrom (1996:2) further indicated that:

> The "empowering" effects of these first attempts to try out an alternative pedagogy was best illustrated by a young Namibian teacher who after the production of her booklet said: I have always wondered where books come from and how they are produced. Now I know that they are done by ordinary people like myself.

Three of the four lecturers expressed optimism regarding student teachers producing pamphlets which other students could use. One of the four lecturers further indicated that the BETD program required student teachers to learn by production.

The lecturers mentioned several areas of concern during these interviews. Issues that the lecturers thought were problematic with their current teaching situation were student teacher lateness and attendance, lack of materials at the college and schools, the use of current materials at the college that are not found in the schools, the shyness of student teachers during group work and presentation, not enough time to prepare classes, inconsistent grading practice, and problems with the English language of student teachers.

During the second and final observation the researcher noted that Lecturers A, B, and C attempted to increase the involvement of the student teachers in the lesson activities from the first observation. These three lecturers also tried to make sure that whenever students were divided into groups, there was a gender balance and a number balance if possible. They also took attendance to determine who was absent and present during the

lesson. Students were involved in many ways, i.e., lecturers gave more assignments to students, individual presentations were increased, and group members were changed more frequently. In one class student teachers evaluated or tried to give constructive comments to their peers who were micro teaching. In general, the atmosphere in their classrooms seemed to be more positive and conducive for learning. The researcher felt that the two interviews and prior observation with the lecturers possibly influenced these changes.

Another noticeable change during the second round of observations was that the researcher observed a new learner-centered strategy being introduced. Lecturer A had invited some of the local community members (parents) into his or her classroom. The topic dealt with African religions. When the students arrived in the classroom the lecturer divided them into groups. The lecturer then placed the six parents amongst each group. The medium of instruction changed to the local language in order to accommodate the parents in the discussion. When the discussions regarding African religions started, the lecturer moved from group to group. The parents were very active in the discussions and shared their religious traditions, some of which were new to both the lecturer and student teachers. The group discussions appeared fruitful and lively, and the student teachers wrote down points which arose in each group.

Once the group discussions were exhausted, one student teacher from each group reported to the whole class. This was exciting because the parents were the primary source of information, not the student teacher's handbooks. At the end of the class two parents summarized the discussions based on their knowledge about the topic. The lecturer told the student teachers to collect the notes from their group discussions to compile them onto a chart for future reference. After the class the researcher met informally with the lecturer. The lecturer stated the parents' presentation was inspiring and he or she was happy with the class discussion because a lot was learned from the parents. Lecturer A stated that involving community members was very worthwhile and s/he would continue to invite community members in the future.

The lecturer was surprised at the positive class atmosphere and remarked that, the involvement of parents provided a better source of explanations than he or she could offer. Lecturer A also pointed out that the learner centered approach creates a positive relationship among teachers, community and the learners, and remarked that, "it is an excellent way to get the community to support the schools." S/he mentioned that the approach would also benefit rural schools which have a shortage of teachers because parents and retired teachers could easily be employed on a voluntary basis.

Lecturer A also indicated that some common understanding between schools and communities needs to be established because of past experiences. The former education system did not involve the community and this is a gradual process because at times parents in schools do not attend important meetings which require their input. However, s/he further indicated that some community representatives, especially the retired teachers are on curriculum panels for local languages, and when schools have traditional ceremonies, parents are always invited. Lecturer A gave an example of the festival which took place at the college and indicated that:

> In 1994 Ongwediva College of Education invited local parents to present a traditional competition for the local people. The main idea was to integrate the community with the college. This event was exciting and motivating. Student teachers learned a lot from these festivals.

It is interesting to note that Lecturer A as well as the other five lecturers stated during their first interview that the college had never involved the community members in their programs. Yet four of the six lecturers attended the traditional festival in 1994. The researcher feels that perhaps the discussion regarding the community in Lecturer A's classroom triggered the memory of Lecturer A. The other lecturers might not have remembered this example or seen it as community involvement in the BETD program because none of them had personally invited the community members to be involved at the college. It is also possible that because the parents were not

in the classrooms they did not connect it to learning within the program or perhaps recognize its relevance.

Although the community members were not interviewed by the researcher, the Lecturer indicated that during the conversations with two of the parents, one mentioned that they were excited to talk to students. The parents told the lecturer that they were also happy to have their views recognized and to have student teachers at the college learn from them. Both stressed that their traditional culture should be offered in the schools so that their children will not forget them. They felt it was a privilege to talk to the college students and mentioned that they were willing to come back to the class if invited again.

In addition, this class was videotaped due to Lecturer A's request. Although the researcher was unable to formally view and discuss the videotape with the lecturer, he did meet informally for about 20 minutes a week later, after Lecturer A had viewed the videotape at home. S/he expressed that videotaping the class was very useful and s/he observed several things. As s/he was previously concerned about the amount of teacher talk, s/he noticed that during this lesson s/he really facilitated the discussion much better. The lecturer was also amazed at the amount of interaction between him/herself, the student teachers and community members. S/he also mentioned that the student teachers' interest and

motivation was increased perhaps due to the topic that was part of the student teachers' cultural history and was meaningful to them.

In contrast to the final observation of the other three Lecturers, the researcher noticed that for Lecturer D, the teaching strategies remained the same. Again the lesson was teacher directed even though the students were in groups, Lecturer D again spoke throughout the lesson without involving the student teachers. S/he continued to ask the student teachers "Do you understand me?" as in the first observation and students always answered "Yes." This was clearly not an effective check for understanding. The classroom atmosphere was similar to the first observation with many students again off task. The lecturer seemed to be unaware of the impact of the classroom climate upon the learning of the students. Similar to the prior observation, some students were in groups while others were seated in isolation. After observing Lecturer D who clearly exhibited teacher directed approach, one wonders how effectively this lecturer could prepare student teachers to teach in a learner-centered environment.

The Student Teachers

First Interview

The purpose of the first interview with the student teachers was to determine their prior school experiences and their understanding of the origin and the meaning of learner-centered education. The researcher also

sought to determine their attitudes toward this approach as well as any learning centered techniques they felt they were using in their teaching.

Student Teachers' Experiences with Schooling

All ten student teachers interviewed showed discontent with their former education. They were all educated during colonial times and pointed out that their education was teacher centered and they did not participate in the lesson activities. One stated:

> My experiences during my primary and secondary school were a teacher centered approach. The teachers prepared everything for the lesson and preached to us. They did not involve us in the lesson activities. Our responsibilities as learners were copying down whatever s/he wrote on the chalkboard. The teacher would even collect the assignment exercise books, without delegating that responsibility to the learners.

All of the student teachers mentioned their dislike toward examinations which forced them to memorize facts they did not understand, and they were unanimous in their objection toward an education system based on ethnic backgrounds. Many of them stated that teachers were not friendly and used corporal punishment as a way to motivate them to learn.

An example of some of the abuse witnessed by the students is related by the following story:

> I remember what happened to one of our classmates. The teacher expected the whole class (grade 9 or standard 7) to explain verbally a science experiment which we did not learn. The teacher taught it to us and he gave us summaries about the experiment. It had to do with "heating magnesium." What happened was that, the guy was asked by the teacher to explain

> the experiment to the class, but unfortunately he could not memorize the steps how to carry the experiments. Instead he mentioned what he could remember. The teacher told him that it was not enough. He promised to give an example on this boy. The teacher gave the boy five strokes (Slashes) in the hands. When the teacher realized that it was not enough, he started beating the boy on the body. The boy cried but there is no one who rescued him from the teachers' hands. The teacher humiliated the boy till he urinated. This was the last day that the boy was seen in school. The issue was not followed, neither of his parents inquired about the issue. I think his parents could not do anything since teachers were the authority. The school principal did not summon the teacher, but instead he told the learners on the assembly the following day that, he does not want learners who are dull in his school and that was the end of the story.

Eight of the ten student teachers attended rural schools in Namibia and mentioned that they were unhappy with their instruction. The army used schools, particularly in the war zones, as camp facilities. This was most common in northern and north eastern Namibia. Soldiers were often teachers and taught in the classroom with military uniforms, complete with rifles. Harber (1993) cited (Konig 1983:31) that:

> The counter productive nature of this policy of soldiers as teachers can be gauged from one Namibian woman's reaction: Imagine somebody teaching you and if you make a mistake, or if he suspects you, he would just point his gun at you, telling you that he would shoot you or your mother. Children and teachers were also recruited to act as spies against their colleagues.

The student teachers said they felt threatened by the soldiers, which in turn produced a lack of concentration during school and therefore they feared failing the examinations. They also said they worried about the school being

shut down if the military teachers were sent to war. All of the student teachers obviously had strong negative feelings about their past school experiences, and maintained that their former colonial education was not humane. They were unanimous in expressing that they would not teach in the way they were taught during their school days.

Student Teachers' Understanding of the Origin and Meaning of Learner-Centered Education

When the student teachers were asked where they thought the current learner-centered approach originated, all ten indicated that learner-centered education was introduced by foreign countries. All of them stated that it is a Swedish program but could not elaborate, however, three out of ten indicated they were told by their lecturers that it was a Swedish program. All of the student teachers stated they first encountered the learner-centered approach after independence when they started with the BETD program in 1994. One student teacher stated:

> I was just exposed to the learner-centered education in January 1994 when I started with my teacher training. It was also introduced in the Namibian education system when Namibia got independence in 1990 from South Africa.

The student teachers' understanding of learner-centered education was similar to that of the lecturers. Most believed that learner participation in class and school activities was integral to the approach. They also saw the

teacher as a facilitator of the lesson with the learners being involved in most of the activities. One indicated:

> Learner-centered education in my own view is a system of learning and teaching, whereby a learner is doing most of the work while the teacher facilitates the learning process. In this process when the learners have problems with the task, the teacher should assist the learner towards the correct solution. It is also grouping learners so that they can come up with their own ideas in the discussion.

Another student teacher pointed out that it is the responsibility of the teacher to involve the learners in the lesson. S/he also addressed the importance of group work because it allowed learners to share ideas and experiences. Several other definitions of learner-centered education follow:

> Learner-centered education is the method in which the learners are mostly involved in the learning and teaching situation. In this case instead of the teacher talking alone, the learners should be mostly involved in the learning situation. The teacher should guide the learners in their learning process.

"Learner-centered approach to me, means that the learners get the chance to express their views, and to explore their knowledge."

> The learner-centered education is a process whereby learners are the ones who are involved in the activities rather than the teacher who is teaching. The teacher should not do everything for the learners like what teachers did in the teacher centered instruction. The learners should be given more opportunities to participate in the lessons and other school activities. Then the teacher allows the learners to be involved in their learning, especially when they conduct experiments. They should also be given opportunity to share their own understanding of the lesson rather than concentrate on things which are written in the textbooks and ignore the learners' views.

There was consensus that the learners should be the focus in teaching and learning with one student teacher mentioning that in order to increase understanding on the part of the learners, that teachers should use a variety of strategies.

In general the ten student teachers seemed to have similar perceptions of what a learner-centered approach is, and they repeatedly used the following terms and phrases during the interviews: learners should be involved in activities, learners should be given time to speak and reflect, they should be given more time to participate in the discussions, they should be given the opportunity to share their experiences, learners' views should be accepted and acknowledged, the teacher should be a facilitator and guider, learners should work in groups, learners should be involved in the learning process, participate in pair work, present parts of lessons to the class and be involved in school, group and individual projects.

All ten student teachers supported the learner centered approach but when asked if they had an opportunity to choose between using a teacher centered or learner-centered approach, seven of the ten indicated they would chose a learner-centered approach because of its emphasis on human dignity. The remaining three stated they would use a combination of learner-centered and teacher directed approaches. One of the three mentioned that since they were required to complete the syllabus then s/he

felt the lecturers should use a teacher directed approach. Another of the three pointed out:

> In my teaching I am using both the learner-centered and teacher centered because in some topics it is difficult to divide learners in groups or pairs and the only method in this case is teacher centered approach. If I see that I cannot put the learners in groups I normally use question and answer method. That way I will manage to involve the learners in the lesson.

This same student teacher indicated that at times it is difficult to divide learners into groups and instead s/he always ended up using a question and answer technique. This student teacher was not sure if the question and answer technique was an aspect of learner-centered approach. A final issue that was mentioned by several of the student teachers was the fact that learner-centered education encouraged reflective thinking. One stated that:

> When I compare how we used to be taught in the past (former education system) with the learner-centered education which is used in the schools today, I can see that it is really helping learners to be creative thinkers. They can compare the theory and practical aspects of what they learn to see if there is any relationship. It also allows learners to experiment, explore and be productive.

All of the student teachers were optimistic about using the learner-centered approach when they do their next school based studies. One student teacher mentioned that s/he liked using the learner centered approach during the last school based study because it "befriended the learners." When comparing the learner-centered approach to the teacher directed approach,

the student teacher stated "Teachers in the past were like preachers or pastors in the church who come in the class and start preaching."

First Observation

The purpose of this observation was to see which teaching strategies the ten student teachers were using during their school based studies. During these observations the researcher discovered that eight of the ten student teachers used some aspects of the learner-centered approach, and seemed to be quite similar in their teaching techniques. Their teaching practice seemed to match their perceptions and beliefs of the learner-centered approach. The eight student teachers (E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, and N) mainly used the following strategies: group work, pair work, accepting the learners ideas, and the learners' participation in several activities during the lesson. Of these techniques, the most commonly used strategy was group work. The researcher also observed that the student teachers not only tried to involve the learners in the lesson activities but tried to attend to those learners who had difficulties.

The following is an example of some of the learner-centered techniques Student Teachers E and F used when co teaching a class. The student teachers organized themselves in such a way that, while Student Teacher E introduced the lesson to the class, Student Teacher F joined in when the learners were given activities to do. When student teacher E

introduced the lesson, s/he noticed that some of the learners could count but were having difficulty writing numbers. Student Teacher E selected four children to write on the chalkboard. After about ten minutes the student teachers told the whole class to go outside. They spaced the learners apart and told them to write certain numbers on the ground. Both student teachers E and "F" moved from one learner to another in order to check who was doing the task correctly and who had problems. After five minutes they told the learners to go back to the classroom.

Student Teacher F then told the learners to sit in pairs. The student teachers handed out cards on which facts were written, and told the learners to discuss these and find the answers. Both student teachers encouraged the children to solve the facts by working together in their pairs. The class teacher also joined them and both the class teacher and Student Teacher E and F walked from group to group to facilitate the activity. At the same time they marked the answers of those who had finished. The researcher felt that this was an exciting exercise. The learners were interacting with the teaching materials and with each other.

Some pairs got everything correct with only two groups of pairs making a few mistakes, but this was a great achievement. In this exercise most of learners appeared to learn from their partners within the context of a meaningful activity. When they finished marking, one student teacher told the whole class that they all did well. Student Teacher E asked the

children to applaud each group. The student teacher reinforced the learner's work using positive remarks such as "good, well done, keep it up." This situation was an example of how co-teachers supported one another and tried to create a positive learning environment. The management of the classroom also was helped due to the collaborative work of the two student teachers and class teacher. After class the two student teachers remained with the two learners identified earlier as having problems in order to assist them.

This lesson was particularly interesting to observe because not only did the student teachers keep prompting various learners in their groups to give their views, but the class atmosphere was extremely positive and the student teachers were also willing to share their perceptions on the topic with the other learners. The researcher felt that the interaction between the teacher-learners and learners-learners was good and encouraging to see.

Unlike Student Teachers E and F who used several learner-centered techniques, Student Teachers G and H were teacher directed. Although both Student Teachers G and H stated they believed in a learner-centered approach and both of them defined learner-centered in the following terms: "involving learners in the lesson activities, teacher becomes a facilitator, and involving learners in group activities," it seemed that these teaching strategies did not appear during the researcher's observations. Both the lessons of student teacher G and Student Teacher H were very teacher

directed. The following is an example of a lesson presented by Student Teacher G:

Student Teacher G entered the classroom, greeted the learners and immediately asked questions regarding the previous lesson. The learners were seated in straight rows in their desks. The learners were quiet, and listened to Student Teacher G while the class teacher was seated at the back of the classroom observing. The student teacher posed a review question for the learners. The learners were reluctant to answer the question, but at last one learner answered. The student teacher then continued delivering the content of the lesson. Indeed the student teacher was knowledgeable about the content, but as s/he continued lecturing, many learners appeared to be off task. Some learners were reading, others writing, and most of them had no books on their desks. This student teacher spent the whole lesson without involving the learners in the lesson. The learners were very quiet and submissive and appeared to show little interest in the lesson. When the lesson was about to end, the student teacher asked the students, "So you understand the topic?" The learners answered "Yes". The student teacher then asked a question regarding the topic of the lesson, but no one answered. The lesson ended and then the student teacher told the learners to expect a test the following day on the work they covered that day

The observation of Student Teacher H was similar to Student Teacher G. S/he dominated the whole lesson by talking to the learners, and kept

referring to examples which were not in the classroom. Even though student teacher H tried to use the question and answer technique at the beginning and end of the lesson s/he dominated the lesson. Even the questions used appeared unclear to the learners because few responded and the rest were answered by the Student Teacher H. The researcher noted that the lack of learner involvement in both these lessons also seemed to effect on task behavior. The learners appeared disinterested and unmotivated compared to the learners in the other student teachers' classrooms.

The researcher noted that although Student Teacher I, J, K, L, M, and N attempted to use group work, some were struggling with this technique. All of the classrooms were overcrowded with as many as fifty learners in some classrooms. Several of the student teachers took over half of the thirty-five minute class period just to arrange the groups. For example, one student teacher asked the class to divide into four groups which resulted in groups of approximately ten to twelve learners. Recognizing that these groups were too large, the student teacher asked them to again divide into six or seven groups. When the learners struggled with this, the student teacher then intervened to help form new groups. The student teacher then went around to each group to explain the assignment which meant the group members had nothing to do until the student teacher approached their groups. The researcher did not look at any of the student teacher's lesson plans, so was unable to determine whether a lack of planning or

awareness prevented the student teacher from assigning the lesson tasks before the groups were formed or even after they were formed but at the same time. The researcher also noted that in all the classrooms, the physical task of forming groups was very problematic due to overcrowded conditions, and the fact that the learners did not have individual desks as in the colleges. A single desk is built to accommodate three to four learners, and they do not lend themselves to a small circular formation. Many times the researcher observed the learners sitting on top of their desks when trying to form groups. The researcher also observed Student Teachers K, L, and M used partner activities which he thought were more effective in the crowded conditions.

Second Interview and Observation

Due to time constraints only eight of the original ten student teachers were interviewed and observed a second time. These eight were chosen according to the researcher's schedule and unfortunately student teacher H and G who were teacher directed were not included. During the second interview the researcher noticed that most of the student teachers were more interested in talking about the learner centered approach than during their initial interview. Again, the researcher thought because they were discussing their lessons, they were more enthusiastic. All eight student teachers identified group work, pair work, pair work, question and answer

method, and involving the learners in activities as learner-centered techniques they utilized during their lesson. They expressed frustration with being unable to efficiently form groups and the lack of space in the classrooms. Most student teachers stated they are not shown any alternatives to group work at the college and several even stated that they are not shown how to effectively use group work. They said they are just told to use group work.

During the second observation, the two Student Teachers, E and F, who were paired seemed to involve the learners in even more activities than their first observation. The other six attempted to once again use group work or pair work throughout various activities during the lesson. It was apparent that several student teachers again had difficulty, perhaps because they had not thought about grouping students before the lesson and this created a management problem. For example in several instances the student teachers spent so much time organizing the groups that they failed to start the activity. Again the large classes posed problems for some of the student teachers who attempted to place learners in groups. Several student teachers who were more successful in their grouping this time used a different technique to form their groups. The learners, instead of moving their long desks and benches, just turned themselves around so they were facing the desk behind them. This resulted in groups of four or six. Others used this same strategy to have students work in pairs. This was much

more effective and resulted in minimal disruption. This technique to form groups had been discussed with the researcher during the second interview. He recognized that as students had not encountered desks like this at the college when forming groups, in most instances they were simply unaware that having students turn around was a viable option.

One particularly interesting observation that the researcher had not seen before was the student teacher who tried to integrate mathematics with a game. The learners went outside the classroom and drew shapes on the ground, designated numbers to the shapes and hopped through the shapes while counting aloud. This reinforced the math lesson. Not only were the learners actively involved but very motivated because they thought it was fun. The researcher also noticed that the learners were coaching each other during the game.

Student Teachers' Views About Teacher Education

During the group interview with the ten student teachers, several student teachers raised concerns regarding their teacher training at the college. They indicated most lecturers were still teacher directed and did not show them learner-centered aspects besides group work and pair work. Three of the student teachers pointed out that the lecturers should not expect them to use learner-centered strategies if the lecturers are using a teacher centered approach in their teaching. In some cases they stated,

lecturers would divide students into groups but would not engage them in any activities throughout the lesson. They also expressed a concern that they fear they would teach the way they are taught in the college.

One student teacher indicated that some of the lecturers told them that the learner-centered approach was problematic in overcrowded classrooms. Furthermore s/he stated:

> Lecturers are still using a teacher centered approach in the college, and they tell us that it does not delay their work because they can cover the work which they had planned for that particular day. Some tell us that they have a lot of important information to tell us and it can only be covered when using the teacher centered approach. I think maybe such lecturers were trained in the teacher centered education system. They use the method they were trained for. I also think they may feel more confident with the lecture and textbook methods.

Some voiced their discontent as exemplified by this comment:

> I have noticed that in other subjects some teacher educators will be preaching to students without involving us in the lesson. While in languages we are used to group work where we share ideas with other learners. I think other lecturers find it difficult to use the learner-centered approach. Maybe they find it demanding or maybe they love talking the whole day long. It could be that they are not following the curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma. I fail to understand them because they were supposed to prepare us so that before we go to teach in schools at least we know what is expected of us.

The student teachers implied that they were confused by the different views held by their lecturers towards learner-centered education and they did not know which teaching strategies to use. This has influenced some students

who stated they use both the learner-centered and teacher centered approach. One student teacher remarked that "the lecturers are the ones who are confusing the student teachers. That is why we find it difficult to use the learner-centered approach because some lecturers do not use it in their teaching." Two student teachers mentioned that some lecturers avoid their questions during the lessons and keep lecturing until the end of the lesson. One said:

> I noticed this problem mainly with new lecturers who joined the college for the first time. It seems they do not receive workshops on how to teach at the college. They teach the way they were taught in schools. When they come to the college they do not want to give students time to share ideas in the classroom. I still remember the lecturers who came to college this year (1996); some of them considered the learner-centered approach as one in which only students take part in and the lecturer sits at his desk without contributing to the student's discussion. This is another problem we are experiencing in music and some other subjects.

The student teachers felt that some lecturers consider learner-centered education as an approach where the learners have control over the classroom, but the student teachers stated they felt learners do need the teachers' feedback on whatever activities they are doing.

The general consensus during the group interview was that the college should be the starting point for student teachers to be socialized within the learner-centered approach. The student teachers believed that lecturers were the main change agents behind learner-centered education

and if it was progressive then students, teachers and the community would have a positive attitude towards its implementation.

The Teachers' Views of Learner-Centered Education

The researcher thought it was worthwhile to also interview the seven classroom teachers who worked with the student teachers during their School Based Studies. The teachers who were interviewed were not observed teaching. The teachers' experiences and feelings toward their early school days were similar to those of the student teachers and lecturers who were educated in Namibia. They disclosed that they did not enjoy their primary or secondary education because it was teacher centered. One stated:

> I remember we were afraid to ask questions in the classroom. If I compare the teacher centered with learner-centered education, I think the learner-centered is a democratic approach which involves the learners in activities, whereas teacher centered education can be termed an autocratic and authoritarian because the teacher dictates and dominates the whole learning situation.

All of the teachers had participated in workshops post independence and were therefore familiar with the term learner-centered. Generally they seemed to hold similar views of learner-centered education and all expressed a positive attitude towards the philosophy. Most teachers also stated that this approach provided increased student involvement.

It is not surprising that many of the teachers' concept of the learner centered approach was limited to group work and pair work. One of the

seven teachers indicated that s/he also used the question and answer technique which was learner-centered. When probed further about grouping, some teachers explained that they assigned students to permanent groups for the term. One teacher mentioned that advisory officers (subject advisors) told them to maintain permanent groups so that learners would get to know each other and be able to work together.

Several stated when they used group work students were more reflective and tended to ask more questions than during the teacher directed approach. The teachers also noted that when learners were divided into groups, they shared ideas with others and became more cooperative with their peers.

Even though most of the teachers appreciated the learner-centered approach, they felt that it had some shortcomings. Several teachers stated that it is difficult to use learner-centered teaching strategies in over crowded classrooms. One teacher pointed out that:

> ...there are a few learners who participate in the discussions while others sit and listen without participating in the group activities. This type of an approach makes the learners become dependent and lazy all of the time. In addition, overcrowding is another problem which we are experiencing in our classrooms. It is difficult to attend to every learner because there is not enough time to do that.

They all felt that learner centered education requires more teaching materials and resources than the traditional approach and materials are scarce, especially in rural areas.

The teachers were asked to indicate their role in the preparation of student teachers. One stated that his or her role was to facilitate the school based studies of the student teachers who are assigned to his or her classroom. By facilitate, the teacher meant that s/he makes sure that the student teacher(s) have all the necessary materials needed for the subject. The teacher also stated that s/he helps students in planning their lessons and gives them feedback on their lesson presentations. One teacher/principal indicated that:

> The BETD students who are at my school, make sure that they use the learner-centered approach in their teaching. I have noticed from other BETD students, who completed their training, that learners love them and are also friendly to them. I also noticed that the learners like the subjects which these student teachers teach because of the new teaching styles.

This teacher/principal felt that the learner centered approach also increases the responsibility of teachers to keep parents informed about their children's performances. Several teachers thought parents should be involved in school activities such as disciplinary committees to help combat absenteeism in schools, and could be invited to school to see how their children learn. One teacher/principal indicated that whenever they have a parent's meeting, a few student teachers are included. This gives them insight into what is expected of them when they complete their teacher training. The principal also mentioned that in the School Based Study Manual (1995) the

role and responsibilities of the principals and teachers of the student teaching partnership schools is delineated.

Some of the teachers expressed concerns regarding their understanding of the approach as well as the implementation of it. Most teachers also expressed the need to be oriented towards learner-centered education. One teacher stated:

> I think learner-centered education is foreign to Namibia. That is why we find it difficult to implement. It is also too early to implement in schools. I think the Ministry of Education and Culture should have established a pilot study to see if it would work effectively. At the same time workshops should be offered on a continuous basis to give teachers, policy makers and students the opportunity to know its advantages and disadvantages.

All teachers indicated that since the implementation of learner-centered education in schools, they have been attending workshops but still feel inadequate to effectively implement the learner centered approach in their classrooms. At the same time all expressed a need for more workshops or help regarding the learner centered approach. Several teachers said that after attending as few as one or two workshops they are expected to teach others how to use this approach which is extremely difficult. Many of the teachers said that they are learning more about this approach from their student teachers as they plan together and observe them.

This study revealed that all the lecturers, student teachers and teachers were unhappy about the colonial education they received because it

dehumanized them and deprived them of other learning opportunities. The study also revealed the positive attitude of all the participants towards the learner-centered approach. Most the participants seemed optimistic about its implementation in the Namibian education system. Though some lecturers, student teachers and teachers indicated some shortcomings, they are still eager to use it in their teachings. In addition, the study revealed that, though lecturers and student teachers used various aspects of the learner-centered approach, they appeared mainly to limit the application of learner-centered education to group work and pair work.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the study and also reflections based upon the two main research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and practices of the lecturers towards the learner-centered approach?

2. What are the perceptions and practices of the student teachers towards the learner-Centered Approach?

Recommendations will also be included. Although the main participants in this study were the six lecturers and the ten student teachers who were interviewed and observed teaching, the researcher also interviewed seven classroom teachers who were working with the student teachers and five Ministry of Education personnel. The researcher also informally met with other staff members and students from Ongwediva College of Education during his four months of data collection. He also viewed relevant documents regarding Basic Education which was implemented after independence in 1990.

All the participants in this study supported the learner-centered approach and were optimistic regarding its implementation in Namibia. Although the study showed there was a range of beliefs as to what

constitutes learner centered education, all participants expressed the belief that the learners should be actively involved and the teachers' main role is that of facilitator and guide. In addition the study revealed that though the lecturers and student teachers used several different teaching strategies, they appeared to limit the application of learner centered education mainly to group work, pair work and student presentations resulting from the group discussions. Though some lecturers and student teachers indicated some short comings with the learner centered approach, they are still eager to use it in their teaching.

Interviews and Observations of the Lecturers

All six lecturers were individually interviewed once and four of the six were then observed teaching. Several days later these four lecturers again were interviewed and observed teaching a second time. Both the interviews and classroom observations each lasted approximately one hour. Interviews with the lecturers revealed that all six of them held a positive attitude toward the learner-centered approach. This was not particularly surprising for four of the six lecturers as they were Namibians who were educated in schools for Blacks during colonial times (pre-independence) and felt extremely negative towards their school experience which they indicated was very teacher directed. They stated that during colonial times, it was believed teachers were the only source of information while the learners

were the recipients of teacher knowledge. Most teachers did not allow the learners to ask questions in the classroom, and those who did ask questions were regarded as impolite and were frequently punished for this offense. Corporal punishment was administered frequently or students were deprived of lunch. Learners were expected to learn by rote and memorized many facts that were meaningless to them. The examinations which stressed this rote learning were the only determinants of learner performance. Given their past education experiences, it is no wonder that these lecturers supported the learner-centered approach. Some of the reasons they gave for supporting this new approach was that it allows the learners freedom to learn and participate in many activities. The democratic aspect of the learner-centered approach was stressed by all the lecturers. They also felt it gave the learners a chance to link theories to real life situations and that the teacher is not the ultimate authority but a facilitator. In contrast, the other two lecturers who were educated in the western world, stated their formal education was mainly learner-centered and they still support this philosophy.

None of the lecturers specifically knew how this approach originated in Namibia but all thought it was introduced by foreign countries. There was some confusion as to exactly which country has had the greatest influence on this approach as currently there are several different countries involved in helping implement the learner-centered approach in Namibia.

Several lecturers assumed this approach originated with the Swedish because they are currently heading the TERP (Teacher Education Reform Project) which is working in conjunction with the Ministry of Namibia. Several personnel from TERP have been located at each of the four colleges of education since independence in order to give workshops regarding this new approach and to help facilitate it's implementation. Although the lecturers seemed to be unaware that Namibians did in fact participate in the formation of the BETD (Basic Education Teacher Diploma) in 1993, and during the inception of Basic Education after independence in 1990, they did however state that Namibians are now working together with different foreign agencies and are beginning to fill leadership positions in the education field.

The four Namibian lecturers' introduction to learner-centered education began after Namibia gained independence in 1990. They learned about learner-centered education mainly by attending required and optional workshops and reading curriculum and program documents. Three of the lecturers in this study are currently involved in the "Higher Diploma Certificate" offered by TERP during college term breaks, and organized through the Ministry of Education. The Diploma is from Umea University in Sweden and the courses stress learner-centered education.

During the first interview with all six lecturers, the researcher discovered that perceptions of what a learner-centered approach entailed

seemed to fall into two categories. The four lecturers who were educated in colonial times held similar views that consisted mainly of teaching strategies used in the classroom. The learner-centered teaching strategies the lecturers mentioned frequently were group work, pair work, projects and having individual student teachers reporting to the class. The other two lecturers seemed to have a more holistic view of the meaning of learner centered education and described characteristics of learner-centered that went beyond classroom teaching strategies. They mentioned the importance of using the community as a resource. They also believed that teachers should collaborate and work together and visit other classes and schools in order to improve their teaching practice. This was not surprising because these were the two lecturers who experience all their schooling in the western world. In addition, all six lecturers talked about the importance of students being engaged in activities with the teacher acting as a facilitator.

It was unfortunate the time constraints prevented the researcher from observing the two lecturers who had experienced a learner centered approach during their schooling. However, observation of the other four lecturers provided interesting data.

The classroom observations revealed that three of the four lecturers did in fact use some of the learner-centered teaching strategies they discussed during the interviews. The main strategies were group work, pair work, individual learner presentations, and acknowledging the learners ideas.

The researcher also observed that these three lecturers tried to keep the students involved and motivated. The most frequently used strategy was group work, but this caused some difficulties for some of the lecturers. For example, one lecturer discovered when asking the students to group themselves, that the groups were formed according to gender and/or friendship and varied in size from two to eight students per group. Gorman, (1978) and Schmuck and Schmuck, (1992) indicate that the optimum level per group should be four to six learners for effective interaction. Several lecturers also indicated that the shyness of students made it difficult for group discussion.

The researcher noted that even what appears to be a simple strategy such as group work and pair work, needs to be discussed amongst lecturers in order to be effectively implemented. Clearly, using group work effectively involves many aspects, not just assigning the correct number of students. The researcher felt that group work was overused and that the lecturers had not even had the opportunity to discuss the dynamics of effective group work amongst themselves.

On the other hand, it was very encouraging to see these three lecturers trying to improve and implement learner-centered strategies. They were enthusiastic and tried to promote the students teachers to explore, collaborate and share ideas with each other. It is not suprising that the strategies they used were primarily group work, pair work and individual

presentations as these were the strategies they not only felt comfortable with but these were the primary strategies they associated with learner-centered education.

An exciting event occurred during the second observation of one of these three lecturers. The lecturer invited six parents into the classroom to share their traditional beliefs. One parent was placed with each group and what transpired was a lively discussion amongst the parents and students, with the lecturer acting as facilitator for the groups. The fact that the students were very motivated and involved led this lecturer to recognize the importance and contribution that the community can have upon education. The feedback from the parents was also extremely positive. Although the lecturer was most likely influenced through a discussion with the researcher in his/her decision to utilize community members, s/he showed a commitment toward learner-centered education by introducing this new strategy. S/he took the initiative and time to invite the parents and expressed that because it was so successful s/he would definitely use this strategy again. This leads the researcher to believe that perhaps a lack of awareness of the many different strategies and aspects involved in learner-centered education is one of the biggest impediments to a successful implementation of the learner-centered approach. Encouraging lecturers to observe each other's classes and providing peer support might also be effective in promoting a greater variety of learner-centered strategies.

Planning together where ever possible would be a more efficient use of their planning time and hopefully this collaboration would promote professional growth. Fullan and Stiegelbaeuer, (1991) and Hargreaves (1992) indicate that teachers who teach in isolation will not improve their teaching practices because they have no time to learn from others.

Although three of the four lecturers' perceptions of learner-centered seemed to match their teaching practice, one lecturer's perceptions was inconsistent with his/her teaching. This lecturer stated that s/he supported a learner-centered approach but used a teacher directed approach throughout the two lessons that the researcher observed. The student teachers were assigned to groups however the lecturer continued to talk throughout the entire lessons without involving the student teachers at any time. When further examining the transcripts of the lecturer's first interview, it was noted that this lecturer did express some concern and conflict with the approach even though the lecturer supported the philosophy of learner-centered education. His/her statement:

> I do not know where this approach (learner-centered education) came from. Maybe from Britain or wherever. We do not know for sure, we just have it. We are just talking about what learner centered is. We do not understand it. Nobody really knows exactly what learner-centered education is in our country. That is why we have to educate ourselves so that we should know it and share it with everybody.

This expresses the uncertainty towards the meaning of learner-centered education and how to successfully implement this approach. This lecturer

felt s/he was using a learner-centered approach because the student teachers were assigned to groups. It is not surprising the lecturer taught throughout the entire class and is consistent with what Rayn (1995:31) had said "Teachers teach the way they were taught, regardless of training, due to their isolation and lack of power to engage in meaningful dialogue, or to make change in curriculum, goal or outcomes."

Other concerns the lecturers mentioned as problematic when using a learner-centered approach were lack of materials at both the college and schools, the shyness of student teachers during group work and presentation, student teacher lateness, inconsistent grading practices throughout the college departments, not enough time to prepare class activities, and the problems with the English language of student teachers.

Interviews and Observations of the Student Teachers

All ten student teachers were individually interviewed and observed teaching once. Eight of the ten student teachers had the second interview and a second classroom observation. All ten student teachers also participated in the group interview. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and the classroom observation were approximately thirty five minutes, the length of the class period.

The findings regarding the perceptions and practices of the student teachers were similar to those of the lecturers. Student teachers were

positive towards the philosophy of learner-centered education and all compared it to their own colonial up bringing which created extremely negative feelings. It was not surprising that the student teacher's views of what learner-centered meant were similar to the lecturer's views and that the strategies they used in their teaching were similar to those of the lecturers, as the introduction to learner-centered education was through the lecturers' classes. They all stressed the need to keep learners active and be a facilitator when teaching.

Eight of the ten student teachers observed teaching utilized some aspects of learner-centered education. Again, most of these student teachers limited learner-centered education to group work and pair work, and in fact, several stated that if the learners were not divided into groups, it was not learner-centered. In many instances, the student teachers lack of skill and awareness of the dynamics of good group work led them to spend half of the thirty-five minute period just forming the groups. Over crowded classrooms and desks and benches that held three to four students caused problems when trying to move the desks into secular discussion group. Frequently the students seemed unprepared to efficiently assign tasks to the learners. The researcher was unable to determine whether this unpreparedness seemed to be from a lack of planning or lack of awareness about efficient organizational practices. The student teachers were very receptive towards suggestions. When the researcher informally suggested

some ways to make the grouping or pair work more effective, the student teachers used these techniques during the next classroom observation. Many stated the lecturers just told them to use group work, but did not demonstrate how to use it effectively. They were eager to try other strategies and gain information about the learner-centered approach from the researcher.

The researcher felt that the opportunity for some student teachers to teach in pairs and collaborate seemed to promote discussion toward the learner-centered approach. He felt the most learner-centered lessons were the two that were taught by a pair of student teachers. They used a variety of strategies and were successful in involving the learners throughout most of their two lessons. They even integrated a math game into a lesson. One solution to help with overcrowded classrooms was to take the learners outside. This pair also used the classroom teacher as a third set of hands to increase interaction with the learners. In addition, the two groups of student teachers who worked and planned in pairs stated they learned a lot from each other.

Unfortunately two student teachers who also expressed their support toward a learner-centered approach and identified aspects of learner-centered education, used a very teacher directed approach when teaching. They lectured throughout the entire class period, and seemed to be unaware that the learners were off task and appeared unmotivated. However, the fact

that eight of the ten student teachers were enthusiastic regarding the approach and were keen to discuss this approach with the researcher is encouraging.

During a group interview with all ten student teachers, the student teachers discussed problems they had mentioned in the individual interviews such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of materials in the schools, lack of enough learning space, and late comers to school due to the long distance the learners travel to schools. By far, their biggest concern lay with the lecturers at the college. The student teachers stated that only a few lecturers at the college modeled learner-centered strategies and most of them used a teacher directed approach. They expressed a concern that they are not able to properly implement the learner-centered approach as most of the lecturers have not shown them how to do it. They feel that the lecturers are key change agents in the new program and therefore should be role models. Again, this is not surprising since prior education is recognized as being a strong influence in our teaching, and most of the lecturers at the college have experienced colonial education in schools for Blacks. If we tend to teach how we were taught then it will take time and awareness to shift from a teacher directed approach to a learner-centered approach.

The fact that three of the four lecturers observed in this study attempted to use the learner-centered approach tends to contradict the views of the student teachers who stated that only a few lecturers at the college

modeled learner-centered strategies. However the researcher recognizes that because participants volunteered for this study and knew its topic, that perhaps these lecturers were the lecturers who not only supported this approach, but felt they used it in their teaching as well.

Classroom Teachers and Ministry Officials

The seven classroom teachers of these student teachers were also informally interviewed. All supported the philosophy of learner-centered education and some noted that the student teachers from the BETD program were more friendly towards the learners than student teachers from the past program. They also said this approach created a more positive learning environment. All had taken workshops regarding the learner-centered approach that were aimed at specific subjects and how to implement them using a learner-centered approach. They were unanimous in expressing a need for more workshops to effectively implement this approach and felt their knowledge and skills in using such an approach were very limited.

Perhaps as the Ministry officials agree, a specific policy document for the learner-centered approach is a starting point. Although the Ministry officials did not agree on the success of the implementation of this approach in Namibia, they all agreed more guidance needs to be given for a successful implementation. As the student teachers implied, the greatest influence toward a successful learner-centered approach in education in Namibia

should be at the college level. The lecturers should be very knowledgeable regarding this approach and not only model how to teach using a learner-centered approach but give a great variety of strategies to use and help develop a more holistic notion of what "learner-centered" really means. We need to recognize that the lecturers are the key change agents to a successful implementation and that if resources are limited that this would be an appropriate place to start.

Although the Namibian situation is complex, it is not the complexity of the situation that makes things difficult but rather the attitude of human beings towards change. However, given the results of this study, there is every reason to believe that learner-centered education will be a success because all the participants are optimistic about its implementation in the Namibian education system.

Recommendations

1. Teacher efficacy lies with the teacher education colleges, and lecturers should train teachers to be efficacious by exposing student teachers to many various aspects of learner-centered education.

Practical Suggestion

Teacher education colleges should offer regular professional development sessions for lecturers in the form of workshops or seminars. During these workshops, learner-centered strategies not only need to be discussed but

modeled as well. Lecturers could work together using a technique such as peer supervision in order to reinforce new learner-centered strategies to be used with their student teachers.

2. The colleges of education, regional offices, and the Ministry of Education, should work together to empower and morally support the graduates of teacher colleges.

Practical Suggestion

The colleges of education, regional offices, and the Ministry of Education should work together to devise a tracking system to locate graduates when they acquire teaching positions. These institutions need to continue to hear about their graduate's concerns and problems in order to continually improve teacher education programs.

3. Teacher education should prepare student teachers to be aware of the role of the teachers, community members and that of the learners in a learner-centered approach. In this respect, community members should be encouraged to be integrated into the program as visiting guests, to share their expertise, and/or on curriculum committees.

Practical Suggestion

Lecturers should do long range planning in subject area teams to determine when and where it is appropriate to have community involvement.

Resource personnel can be parents, or local people with expertise in a variety of areas.

4. The lecturers should not only expose student teachers to many different teaching strategies but should invite and incorporate feedback from the student teachers regarding their teaching. Student teacher feedback will give the lecturers insight into the student teachers' views of their teaching strategies.

Practical Suggestion

An evaluation form should be devised with input from all parties involved (lecturers, student teachers and the administration). The objective of the evaluation should be to promote professional growth and should also indicate strengths as well as areas for future growth. Lecturers should be evaluated at least once a term by the student teachers.

5. Lecturers and teachers should collaborate with their colleagues in order to improve their teaching practices.

Practical Suggestion

Team teaching, co-planning, observing others teach and carrying out research in a collaborative manner should be encouraged For example, some lecturers' classes could be blocked together to accommodate planning and team teaching.

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Appendix A

Aims, Structure and Admission Requirements for the BETD Teacher Education Program.

Appendix A

Aims, Structure and Admission Requirements for the BETD Teacher Education Program.

The Broad Curriculum for Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1994:3) clearly outlines the aims of the new teacher program:

1. develop a teacher who will respect and foster the values of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, contribute to nation building, and respond positively to the changing needs of Namibian society

2. develop understanding and respect for cultural values and beliefs, especially those of the Namibian people

3. enhance respect for human dignity, and sensitivity and commitment to the needs of learners

4. develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical, and critical thinking

5. develop the ability to actively participate in collaborative decision making

6. develop social responsibility towards learners, colleagues, the community, and the nation as a whole

7. promote gender awareness and equity to enable all Namibians to participate fully in all spheres of society

8. enable the teacher to promote environmental awareness and sustainable management of natural resources in the school and community

9. develop awareness of the varying roles and functions of a teacher and commitment to the teaching profession

10. develop an understanding of learning as an interactive, shared, and productive process

11. enable the teacher to meet the needs and abilities of the individual learner through organisation, management, and assessment of teaching and learning processes

12. prepare the teacher to strengthen the partnership between school and community

13. develop adequate command of English and another language of Namibia in order to be able to use them as media of instruction

14. prepare the teacher to be able to develop and use the creative and expressive abilities and skills of the learners

15. develop the ability to create learning opportunities which will enable learners to explore different ways of knowing, and develop the whole range of their thinking abilities

16. provide the student with sufficient breadth in curriculum content and depth in selected subject areas, to be able to identify and select basic knowledge content for learners, and to organise and sequence content and learning situations appropriately

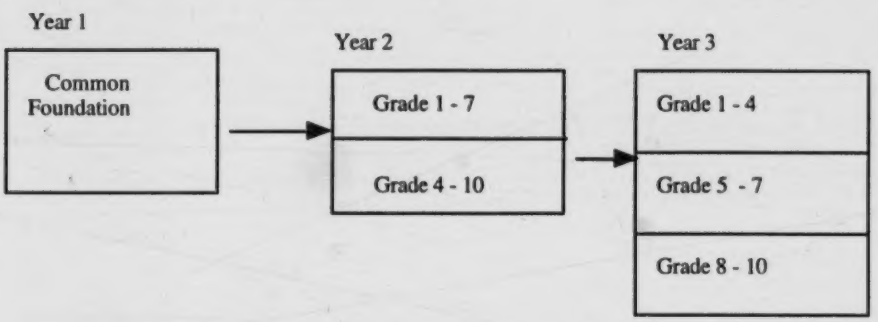
17. enable the teacher to understand and utilise current knowledge of children's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual development

18 develop a positive attitude towards individual differences and enable teachers to utilise them to meet social and individual needs

Structure of the BETD

The first year of study is considered as a common foundation for all student teachers. At this level of study, student teachers focus on the "children's educational and developmental needs." They also observe children in the classroom by visiting schools. In their second year of study, students choose a level of grade specialization, for example Grades 1-7 or Grades 5-10. In their third year, they specialize in the subject that they will be teaching in specific grades. This is the final year of their program in which they have to study in depth the areas of their subject specialization. As the third year is their final year of study, they must also choose from three teaching options: Grades 1-4, Grades 5-7 or Grades 8-10.

The structure of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) is illustrated bellow:



Source: Ministry of Education and Culture. The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (June, 1994:7).

Admission Requirement to the (BETD)

The admissions requirement to the Basic Education Teacher Diploma is stipulated in the program's Broad Curriculum for Basic Education. The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1994:5) indicates that:

> Admission to the study presupposes that students have the necessary competencies to be able to fully participate in the programme and gain the diploma, and have the potential for becoming a good teacher.

These "potential competencies" of the candidate include personal and social qualities, work experiences, particularly community and other relevant experiences on the basis of which the admission committee may approve a candidate.

The potential competencies are as follows

1. Maturity: The minimum age of entry to the course is 18 years. However, if the applicant is below the minimum age of entry, s/he can be admitted if s/he shows sufficient maturity and fulfills other competencies required.

2. Suitability: The applicants will be evaluated based on their views of education. In addition, a certain level of communication skills are required because the program needs applicants who can express themselves in English, as this is the medium of instruction at the teacher education colleges. The applicants, "critical attitude" towards education will also determine suitability for admission to the course of study.

3. Academic level

The minimum academic requirement for entry to the study is passing with Grade G at IGCSE including Mathematics and English. Applicants with Grade 10 and suitable teaching and community experiences will also be regarded as meeting the minimum admission to the study. The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1994:6) states that:

> The quality and extent of teaching experience, community work or other experience in addition to Grade 10 (or combination of Grade 10 and Grade 12 studies) must be such that the total competencies can be said to be equivalent to the Grade 12 competencies for the purposes of the BETD course study. Applicants without a full Grade 12 who are selected for an interviews will take diagnostic tests in English and Mathematics.

The admission entry requirements to the course will change in the near future, and Grade 12 will be the preferred minimum entry requirement.

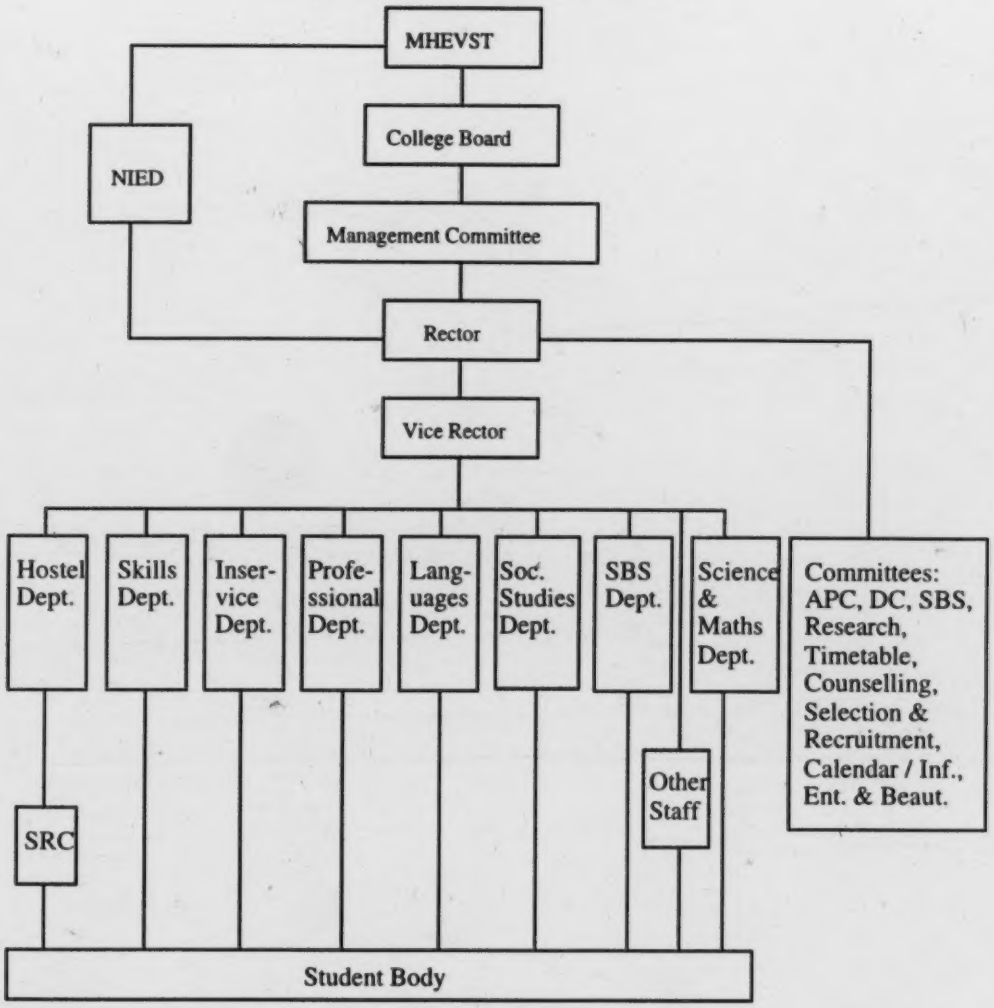
4. Interview: Applicants who are be selected for the course will be interviewed to assess their teaching, social, and personal experiences. The applicants will be given an overall rating of: suitable, very promising or unsuitable (The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma, 1994).

Appendex B

Organizational Structure of Ongwediva College of Education and 1996 Demographic Information concerning Staff and Student Teachers

Appendix B

Organizational Structure of the College



1996 Demographic Information Concerning Staff and Student Teachers

1. Introduction

1996 was a year of challenges, constraints and successes. It was also a year of learning as most of the members of staff were new in their positions. Both the HOD for SBS, the HOD for hostels and student affairs and the Vice-Rector were new in their positions. A big portion of the lecturing staff was also new to the College. However, with the success made, despite a huge proportion of new members of staff, one can safely conclude on an optimistic note that more successes lie ahead for the College in 1997 and the years to come.

2. 1996 Student Population at Ongwediva College of Education

At the beginning of the academic year there were 828 BETD student teachers at Ongwediva College of Education of which 240 were in the first year, 273 in the second year and 315 in the third year. In the process, the College lost a number of students. Some left the College for other professions while others were deceased. In year 1, a total of 4 students left the College, while 6 left in year 2 and 2 were lost in year 3. Of these two female students passed away; one in the first few months of the year (just after being transferred to Caprivi College) and another one passed away towards the end of the year.

The total student population by gender was therefore reduced as follows:

Year Level	Males	Females	SUM
Year 1	114	122	236
Year 2	151	116	267
Year 3	182	131	313
SUM	447	369	816

3. BETD Teachers Released in the Field by OCE at the End of 1996

At the end of the 1996 academic year Ongwediva College released a total of 313 student teachers specializing in different areas. These students will hopefully receive their BETD certificates during the Diploma Ceremony planned for April 19, 1997. Most of them have already been placed in the schools where they will be teaching as from January 1997. The following is an illustration of the number of students by gender released in different areas of specialization:

Specialization	Males	Females	SUM
ECE	20	73	93
Maths & Science 8-10	38	24	62
Maths & Science 5-7	9	19	28
PreVoc. Agric.	17	15	32
Social Studies 8-10	27	17	44
Languages 8-10	30	14	44
Humanities	1	9	10
SUM	142	171	313

Initially, it was decided that the outgoing students be replaced with an intake of 250 student teachers. However, seeing that the College was going to

release 313 new teachers it was decided that the intake for 1997 be raised from 250 to at least 300.

It should also be mentioned that throughout the year the College seemed to have a serious problem concerning the keeping of up to date statistics. None of the offices concerned was able to give accurate figures of students at any given time. This was also aggravated by the fact that no procedures were put in place regarding whom the students should inform if they decide to quit the College. In most cases no one seemed to know the whereabouts of students who quitted the College. It is also regrettable that at times one could still find the name of a deceased student still appearing on the class lists. The control mechanism for "coming in" and "going out" of the College, so to say, will therefore need to be strengthened for 1997.

4. College Staffing

Serious staffing problems were experienced throughout the year. Lower Primary Education in the Professional Studies Department seem to have been hit the hardest, particularly in the third term when preparations for the specializations and critical inquiry started. However due to the cooperation received from the teacher educators in the E.T.P. Department the College managed to improvise and re-located some E.T.P. teacher educators to lower primary.

All in all, there were 57 teacher educators with on Rector and one Vice-Rector, thus bringing the total to 59 members of staff. The 57 teacher educators were distributed over eight existing Departments as follows: 13 teacher educators in the Professional Studies Department, 12 teacher educators for the Maths & Science Department, 11 for Languages Department, 6 for Social Studies Department and 10 for Skills Department. One for SBS and Hostels respectively, 3 teacher educators are currently serving in the Inservice Department. Though still part of the College, the Inservice Department is physically located at the Ongwediva Teacher Resource Center. The distribution of members of staff by gender across Departments was as follows:

Department	Male(s)	Female(s)	SUM
Professional St.	4	9	13
Maths & Science	11	1	12
Languages	2	9	11
Social Studies	4	2	6
School Based St.	1	-	1
Hostel & St. Aff.	1	-	1
Inservice Dept.	1	2	3
Skills Dpt.	7	3	10
SUM	31	26	57

Towards the end of 1996 one teacher educator joined the Professional Studies Department and one more joined the Maths and Science Department. Two more US-PeaceCorp Volunteers were added to the

College to replace the three who were to leave the College at the end of the year. It is planned at the Volunteer lecturers be used in ETP and Languages. The 57 teacher educators can further be broken down as follows:

Country / Organization	Total
Namibians	42
Contract lecturers	7
UNDP	2
APSO	3
US Peace Corp	3

After assessing the possible staffing needs for 1997 submissions were made for posts to be advertised as follows:

> two lecturers for Agricultural Science, one lecturer for English, one senior lecturer for Lower Primary, one lecturer for Lower Primary, two lecturers for commerce, one lecturer for Music and one more for Woodwork.

If these posts are filled, the College can anticipate minimum stress in terms of overloading lecturers due to staffing shortages.

5. Staff Development

In 1996 two teacher educators were on study leave for Master's Degree in UK while one teacher educator was also on study leave for a Master's Degree in Alberta, Canada. Six teacher educators were pursuing a Higher Education Diploma organized by TERP. Some more teacher educators, about five in total, will start a Master's program in English Language teaching beginning of 1997. Some have pursued private studies through distance education

studies. Though these programs are not financed by the College it is evident that the College did well for the 1996 academic year in terms of staff development. A number of lecturers have also been recommended for further studies in 1997. One member of the management team will leave in January 1997 for studies in the United States. Besides these major studies a number of workshops were also organized at College level where areas such as learner-centered education and action research were tackled.

Appendix C

Consent Form for Lecturers and Student Teachers

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY: Mubita Villem Chaka

I_____agree to participate in the interview/observation of this study on the basis that I volunteered for the study and that I have all the **rights** to freely withdraw from the interview/observation of this study at any time without **penalty, risk and loss**.

The researcher has explained to me in comprehensive terms the nature and purpose of the study and how the data (results) will be used.

I will remain **anonymous** in the study and the raw data from interviews and observations will remain **confidential**. The researcher promised to use "**pseudonyms**" in the report or thesis. The research or information obtained will not be used to disadvantage me. There are no other persons other than the researcher and myself who will have access to the raw data.

_____
Signature of the participant.

_____
Place where interview/observation conducted

_____
Date: Consent Form completed

(For Researcher's Use Only)

_____
Sign

Date:_____

Witness

_____
Sign

Date:_____

Appendix D

Letters of Permission from the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture and from Ongwediva College of Education

NAT INSTITUTE FOR ED DEV 06221 502446 184

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE for EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Enquires: P. SWARTS File No.: 13/2/7/3/5 19 March1996

Mr V.M. Chaka
University of Alberta
Faculty of Education
Department of Elementary Education
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
CANADA

Dear Mr Chaka

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ONGWEDIVA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Your request for permission to conduct research at the Ongwediva College of Education from May 1996 to end of August 1996 for partial fulfillment of the requirements for your M.Ed. degree is hereby granted.

Kindly liaise with the Ongwediva College Management on the logistics involved to carry out your research at the College.

Sincerely

Patti Swarts

PATTI SWARTS
ACTING DIRECTOR: NIED

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
NIED NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
1996 -03- 19
Private Bag 2034
Okahandja
Namibia

cc Ms L. Katoma, Permanent Secretary, MBEC
Mr I.V. Ankama, Permanent Secretary, MHEVTST
Mr G.W. Fourie, NIED
Mr H. Hatutale, Rector: Ongwediva College
Mr G. Tjipueja, Research Officer: NIED

NIED

Private Bag 2034 Okahandja, Namibia
Telephone: (+264) 0621 502 446
Fax: (+264) 0621 502 613

LONGA NENYANYU

Ongwediva College of Education

Tel. 06751-30001 Fax 06751-30006 Private Bag X5507 Oshakati 9000

15.11.96.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mr. Chaka, V.M. Currently doing his Masters degree in Education at the University of Alberta, Canada, was granted approval to conduct his proposed research study on the pre-service Teacher Education program at Ongwediva College of Education. The duration of Mr. Chaka's study was from May to August 1996.

Thanking You

Sincerely,

Nyambe, K.J.
(Vice-Rector, Ongwediva College of Education)

cc. Mr. Hatutale (Rector, Ongwediva College of Education)

The Rector
ONGWEDIVA COLLEGE
OF EDUCATION
1996 -11- 15
Private Bag X5507
OSHAKATI 9000